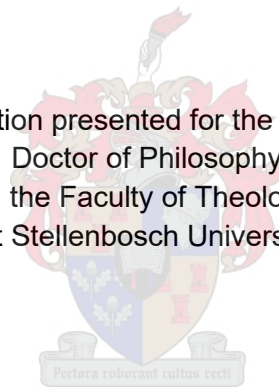


The Reception of the Grace Formula in Old and New Testament Theologies: A Hermeneutical and Theological Study

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ABSTRACT

Key concepts: grace formula, mercy motto, doxological dictum; God's mighty marvels, wondrous works; divine deed dimension; ergological; *pathos*; σπλάγχνα; σπλαγχνίζομαι; theontology; verballity.

Key categories: presence of grace formula in OT; presence of grace formula in NT; verballity of Biblical speech; reception of grace formula in OT and NT; reception of grace formula in OT, NT and Biblical Theologies; Testaments of the XII Patriarchs; Testament of Zebulon; parables of Jesus; compassion of Jesus; σπλάγχνα/σπλαγχνίζομαι in NT.

The so-called "grace formula" (mercy motto) worded in Exodus 34:7 and six other *loci* in the Old Testament is a central motif in the Old Testament. It played an important role in shaping Old Testament theology as well as early-Jewish Hellenistic thought. It also influenced the conceptions of New Testament authors. Although the mercy motto does not appear in its full guise in the NT, it is possible to detect its presence by applying an appropriate methodological and heuristic lens. The grace formula is a compendium of God's benevolent disposition and beneficent deeds, and an apt representation of the "divine deed dimension" displayed in God's works of mercy, compassion, patience and lovingkindness. In its "verballity", it offers a corrective to static, impassive and intransitive categories, alien to Hebrew speech, which are used in Old Testament and New Testament theologies, as well as in dogmatics outlining a doctrine of God. Up to the present, it has not received adequate reception as an important and foundational theme in Old Testament, New Testament and Biblical theology, as well as in theological subdisciplines like dogmatics. As an important theme in certain New Testamental writings, it has also not enjoyed proper acknowledgment. The aim of the thesis is to investigate the inadequate reception of the grace formula, and to demonstrate the important role that it had in the formation of Old Testament and New Testament thought, and therefore ought to have in Old Testament and New Testament theologies. Since the presence of the motto in the New Testament is on a covert level, it first has to be "unearthed" through an exegetical and hermeneutical approach which will show that there are many allusions to the grace formula in the New Testament, of which the concept σπλαγχνίζομαι as expressed in the words and deeds of Jesus is an eminent example. The grace formula could qualify as a theological category establishing a unity and continuity between the Old and New Testaments. It has the potentiality to act as a central theme (if not *the* central theme) of an Old Testament, New Testament or Biblical theology.

OPSOMMING

Sleutelkonsepte: genadeformule, barmhartigheidsmotto, doksologiese *dictum*; God se wonderdade, groot daade, magtige daade; daad-dimensie; ergologiese; *pathos*; σπλάγχνα; σπλαγχνίζομαι; teontologie; verbaliteit.

Sleutelkategorieë: genadeformule in Ou Testament; genadeformule in Nuwe Testament; verbaliteit van Bybelse spraak; resepsie van genadeformule in die OT en NT; resepsie van genadeformule in OT-, NT- en Bybelse teologieë; Testament van die Twaalf Aartsvaders; Testament van Sebulon; gelykenisse van Jesus; innige barmhartigheid van Jesus; σπλάγχνα/σπλαγχνίζομαι in NT.

Die sogenaamde “genadeformule” (barmhartigheidsmotto, doksologiese *dictum*) wat in Exodus 34:6 en 6 ander *loci* in die Ou Testament voorkom, is ’n sentrale motief in die Ou Testament. Dit het ’n belangrike rol in die vorming van Ou-Testamentiese teologie asook vroeg-Joodse Hellenistiese gedagtegang gehad. Dit het ook ’n grondliggende invloed op die denkwys van sommige Nuwe-Testamentiese outeurs gehad. Die genadeformule kom nie voor in die Nuwe Testament nie, maar met ’n gepaste metodologie en heuristiese lens is dit moontlik om die verborge teenwoordigheid daarvan in die Nuwe Testament bloot te lê. Die genadeformule is ’n kompendium van God se welwillendheid en weldadigheid, en ’n gepaste weergawe van die “Goddelike daad-dimensie” waardeur sy barmhartigheid, genade, geduld en goedheid tot verwerkliking kom. Gegee die “verbaliteit” van die verwoording van die formule, kan dit as korrekatief toegepas word op Ou-Testamentiese en Nuwe-Testamentiese teologieë asook dogmatieke wat werk met abstraherende, passiewe en onoorganklike kategorieë, vreemd aan Hebreeuse spraak. Tot op hede het die genadeformule nog nie voldoende resepsie binne die kaders van teologieë van die Ou Testament of Nuwe Testament, of teologiese subdissiplines geniet nie. Dit geniet ook nie behoorlike erkenning as ’n grondliggende motief in die Nuwe Testament nie. Een van die doelwitte van die studie is om die karige resepsie van die genadeformule te ondersoek, en aan te toon watter rol dit gespeel het in Ou-Testamentiese en Nuwe-Testamentiese beskouings, en derhalwe ook behoort te speel in teologieë van die Ou en Nuwe Testament. Aangesien die genadeformule nie eksplisiet in die Nuwe Testament voorkom nie, moet ’n eksegetiese en hermeneutiese benadering gevolg word om verwysings na, of suggesties van die genadeformule te vind waardeur sy implisiete teenwoordigheid blootgelê kan word. ’n Besondere voorbeeld van so ’n verwysing is die konsep σπλαγχνίζομαι wat deur Jesus in sy bediening verwoord en uitgeleef word. Die genadeformule leen hom as teologiese kategorie om die eenheid van, en kontinuïteit

tussen die OT en die NT te bevestig. Dit het ook die potensialiteit om 'n sentrale tema (indien nie *die* sentrale tema nie) van 'n Ou-Testamentiese, Nuwe-Testamentiese of Bybelse/Sistematiese teologie te wees.

PREFACE

The idea for this study originated many years ago. In 1998, I had to do a translation into Afrikaans of a work by Rachmaninov to be performed by my choir, Canticum Novum. The words were a paraphrase of Psalm 145, and it was in this way that I first became aware of the formula-like words “Merciful and compassionate is the Lord, patient and full of steadfast love.” Thus started a voyage of exploration and discovery lasting many years which has enriched my life. This study is dedicated to all the many members, past and present, of Canticum Novum Choir.

I thank my supervisor, Professor Robert Vosloo, for the opportunity I had to pursue this subject.

I dedicate the work to my wife Marike, my daughters Elsa-Marié and Jani, and my son Steyn. They are a source of constant blessing for me.

Initially, when quoting Greek or Hebrew texts, I copied the letters one by one via the “Symbol” option on my laptop, which proved to be a very laborious and time-consuming process. I soon resorted to copying and pasting such texts, which saved me hours and days of work. I most gratefully acknowledge the resources of the following websites of which I made use: Biblegateway.com, Biblehub.com, Blueletterbible.org, Ellopos.net and Textexcavation.com.

All translations are my own.

The very first thing that Johann Sebastian Bach wrote on the title page of all his cantatas and some other compositions of his, was the abbreviation “J.J.” – for the Latin “Iesu Iuva”, “Jesus, help.” The last thing that he wrote on the final page of his all his cantatas and other works, was the abbreviation “S.D.G.” – this is the motto which I should like to invoke over this study: Soli Deo Gloria.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

1.1 Rationale and methodology

The so-called “grace formula” is a formula which appears seven times in the Old Testament and which reads as follows: “Compassionate and merciful is the Lord, slow to anger and abounding in constant goodness”¹. The term “grace formula” was coined in an article by Hermann Spieckermann in 1990². He concludes his article with the suggestion that the grace formula be accorded greater importance in a theology of the Old Testament, with the implication that it has not been granted adequate reception within the cadres of Old Testament theology up to that point: “Even so, its theological substance, also documented in a rich reception history, evidently makes it advisable to accord it greater significance than up to now in determining the theological centre of the Old Testament”³.

His observation could however be seen as part of larger issues. Concomitant to Spieckermann’s view regarding the less than adequate reception of the grace formula in theologies of the Old Testament, the question could be posited to what extent the grace formula has enjoyed reception within theologies of the New Testament, a question to which the answer would appear to be in the negative. One likely explanation for the apparent lack of reception of the grace formula in both Old Testament and in New Testament theologies may be that, in the first instance, not enough cognisance has been given to the reception of the formula in the Old Testament and New Testament itself, since a theme can only be developed within the sphere of Old Testament and New Testament theology if it has been recognised as important theme within the Testaments themselves. A last issue could be mentioned: apart from Spieckermann’s view that the grace formula in particular has not received sufficient recognition within Old Testament theology, there are also scholars that are of the opinion that the concepts of mercy or compassion in general have not enjoyed adequate reception in theologies of the Old Testament. In a study published in 2003, Matthias Franz declares the following: “A systematic treatment of the statements of mercy in the Old Testament is still in a

¹ The various translational options and possibilities will receive attention in chapter 2. With small variations such as word order, the full formula appears in Exodus 34:6, Nehemiah 9:17, Psalms 86:15, 103:8, 145:8, Joel 2:13 and Jonah 4:2.

² “Gnadenformel”, Hermann Spieckermann, “Barmherzig und gnädig ist der Herr...”, ZAW 102 (1990) 1-18. An alternative English term will be suggested by the present author in due time.

³ “Immerhin läßt ihr theologisches Gewicht, auch durch die reiche Rezeptionsgeschichte dokumentiert, es als ratsam erscheinen, ihr bei der Bestimmung des theologischen Zentrums des Alten Testaments größere Bedeutung als bisher beizumessen”, Spieckermann, art.cit. 18.

beginner's stage"⁴. He subsequently focuses on one instance of such a statement of mercy in the Old Testament, namely the grace formula as found in Exodus 34:6-7 (with its parallels in the Old Testament and elsewhere) in an effort to accord the grace formula more recognition and acknowledgment than it had received up to the publication of his study.

The comments by the two authors quoted above will presently be evaluated. Against this introductory background, the purpose of the present study could be tabled: it is an attempt to investigate the extent of reception that the grace formula has enjoyed in theologies of the Old Testament, but also in theologies of the New Testament⁵. In order to examine and determine the degree of reception of the formula in Old Testament theology, the methodology will be as follows: firstly, literature since the middle of the previous century dealing with the general concepts of mercy, compassion or grace and their reception within theological disciplines will be surveyed. The reason for this *modus operandi* is that books having mercy as topic would be the first "net" in which to catch references to the grace formula. In principle, it would be hard to imagine that the theme of mercy could be discussed in any literature without at least mentioning the grace formula, since in this formula, like in no other phrase in the Old Testament, we find a concentration of the concepts of compassion and mercy⁶. Secondly, in a concentric narrowing of the focus, a synopsis of literature which deals specifically with the grace formula and its degree of perceived reception will be done, in order to aid the researcher in determining, and in a way quantifying, how much recognition by authors it has enjoyed. In order to prepare the ground for such a survey, two matters regarding the grace formula which are pertinent to the overview of books and articles will first be dealt with, namely first the question of terminology and second the question whether there are phrases in the Old Testament which could also qualify as wordings of the formula of grace besides the seven quoted instances. If it transpires that the results of this survey of literature support the hypothesis that the concepts of mercy in general and of the formula of mercy in particular have indeed not been adequately received in Old Testament theology, an effort will be made to explain this *lacuna*. Lastly, reasons why the grace formula has the potential to be co-opted as a hermeneutical key to the interpretation of the main themes of the Biblical message will be suggested. A different methodology will be applicable when the present research moves to

⁴ "Eine systematische Aufarbeitung der Gnadenaussagen des Alten Testaments steckt noch in den Anfängen", Matthias Franz, *Der barmherzige und gnädige Gott. Die Gnadenrede vom Sinai (Exodus 34, 6-7) und ihre Parallelen im Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt* (Monografie), BWANT 160 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2003) 4.

⁵ Another area regarding which the grace formula could be of relevance, is that of Systematic Theology. Although the scope and extent of the present is mainly a focus on the relevance of the grace formula for OT and NT theologies, the applicability of the grace formula to Systematic Theology will also receive mention.

⁶ This aspect of the grace formula will become even more evident in later discussion.

the sphere of the New Testament; this methodology and the reasons for a modified *modus operandi* will be tabled then.

1.2 Survey of literature with the concept of mercy/compassion as subject

In 1962, Abraham J. Heschel's work in two volumes concerning the prophets of the Old Testament was published⁷. This date will serve as *terminus a quo* for the present study⁸. A sizable part of his second volume is devoted to the concept of "the divine

pathos", which one could describe as his collective noun for all the attributes and activities of God directed to human beings, such as mercy, compassion, grace and goodness. It must

be noted that even though the subject of his work is the Old Testament prophets, he does not confine himself to the prophetic literature when he discusses God's "pathos." Despite the fact that almost six decades have elapsed since his work has seen the light, it still contains illuminating insights into the divine attributes of pity and compassion, insights which make it a significant work to this day⁹. Heschel refers to "conceptual notions" such as "righteousness", "goodness", "wisdom" and "unity" which are employed in efforts to formulate a doctrine of God, but which are inadequate to do justice to the concept of God's "pathos", which is a term signifying involvement and dynamic activity on the part of God, whereas the first-mentioned terms have a static and passive connotation. He makes the following statement: "In terms of frequency of usage in biblical language, they are surpassed by statements referring to God's

⁷ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets*, vol. II (New York: Harper, 1962).

⁸ The reasons for selecting this *terminus* are the following: first, it enables an overview of literature which spans neither too long nor too short a chronological period. Second, it engages with Franz's *terminus a quo*, which is 1957, the year in which Joseph Scharbert's article on Ex. 34:6 was published, and it continues where Franz's *terminus ad quem* leaves off (2003, the date when his work was published). Third, this choice made possible the inclusion of a representative and important Jewish theological work, that of Heschel (1962); it is hardly conceivable that one could theologise about the Old Testament without co-opting insights from Jewish theology. Fourth, with the exception of a work by Joseph Wobbe dealing with the concept of grace in Paul's works (1932; see footnote 25), no monographs devoting significant attention to the subject before this date were found, even though surveying available literature not only in English, but also in Afrikaans, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Spanish (Castilian) and Catalan. It was found that even theologies of the Old Testament do not elaborate extensively on the topic of mercy or on the thematics of the grace formula. A final consideration for the starting point was the fact that the earliest scholarly articles on the topic that could be found were published more or less contemporaneously with Heschel's work: Joseph Scharbert, "Formgeschichte und Exegese von Ex 34,6f und seiner Parallelen", *Biblica* 38 (1957) 130-150, Robert Claude Dentan, "The literary affinities of Ex 34,6f", *Vetus Testamentum* 13 (1963) 34-51, and Alfred Jepsen, "Gnade und Barmherzigkeit im Alten Testament", *Kerugma und Dogma* 7:4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1961) 261-271. The first two articles were sourced by Franz.

⁹ It should be mentioned that his contribution met with some criticism, for example that he was addressing issues that had already been laid to rest. John L. McKenzie, S.J., in a review of Heschel's book, published in *Theological Studies* 24 (Baltimore: Theological Studies Inc., 1963) 470-471, states the following: "Much of the rationalism which he combats is dead or moribund in exegetical and theological circles". However, this statement is questionable. For more than half a century after Heschel's work advocating the pathos of God (or McKenzie's criticism of it) has appeared, there are still many voices of concern raised about the lack of reception within exegetical, hermeneutical and systematic domain of the concept of divine mercy, a phenomenon which will receive discussion in due time.

pathos, which...*has never been accorded proper recognition in the history of biblical theology* [my italics]¹⁰. His views will receive more attention in the course of the discussion; what is noteworthy at this stage is that his opinions derive from a Jewish theological background.

The publication dates of two more recent works (2013 and 2015) will serve as provisional *termini ad quem* for the present study¹¹. In 2013, Walter Kasper's work *Barmherzigkeit. Grundbegriff des Evangeliums – Schlüssel christlichen Lebens* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder) saw the light¹². From the outset, he declares that mercy is a "crucially relevant, but forgotten topic" in theology and Christian life¹³. He continues by claiming that it is a "criminally neglected" topic¹⁴. It is notable that these statements about the "failure of theological reflection" regarding the message of mercy show many similarities to Heschel's statements half a century earlier that the notion of God's pathos has never been sufficiently co-opted in disciplines and sub-disciplines of theology. Kasper observes that as soon as an effort is made to investigate the central meaning of divine mercy in the Old and New Testaments, "one makes the astounding, in fact shocking, realisation that this topic, which is so central for the Bible and so relevant for the present experience of reality, appears at best in the margins of the lexica and handbooks of dogmatic theology"¹⁵. He comes to the "disappointing" and "even catastrophic" conclusion that the concept of mercy is hardly a systematic determinant within the sphere of theology¹⁶. In a vein similar to Heschel's, he points out the difficulties of a dogmatics of God which is constructed on static and metaphysical concepts regarding the being or essence of God, and which is therefore a process based upon abstraction: "...within the parameters of the metaphysical attributes of God, there is scarcely room for a concept of mercy, which derives not from the metaphysical essence, but rather from the historical self-revelation of God"¹⁷, a wording that might equally well have come from Heschel.

In 2015, a work by Carlo Rocchetta and Rosalba Manes, *La tenerezza grembo di Dio amore* (Bologna: Edizione Dehoniane Bologna) was published in which they professed to have as goal to "show the particular richness of the concept of God's mercy/compassion"¹⁸. Their

¹⁰ Heschel, *The Prophets*, vol. II, p.2.

¹¹ Provisional in the sense that the publication of more monographs on the topic is to be hoped for. Secondly, some articles on the topic postdate these *termini*. A survey of articles on the topic follows.

¹² English translation: *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014).

¹³ Heading of chapter 1: "Mercy: A Crucially Relevant, but Forgotten Topic", Kasper, *Mercy*, p.1.

¹⁴ Subheading to 1.3: "Mercy: Criminally Neglected", op.cit. 9.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Op.cit. 9,10.

¹⁷ Kasper, *Mercy*, p.11.

¹⁸ "...mostrare la ricchezza specifica del concetto di tenerezza di Dio" [italics in original], op.cit. 11. The term "tenerezza grembo" is their equivalent for the Hebrew *raḥum*; "tender-heartedness" would be the closest

contention is that not enough attention is devoted to the notion of mercy as a theological category in its own right¹⁹. They turn down the tendency to think and reason about God in terms of impersonal and metaphysical abstractions, which render Him into a “cold, distant and detached deity”²⁰, an “apathetic Absolute, or an Idea”²¹, and they refer to the Old Testament notions of *rāḥam/hānan*²² or the New Testament notions of *splāchna/splanchnízomai* to conclude that these terms imply a divine “pathos” (Heschel again), “an *affective and effective* involvement, a love/kindness therefore, which does not limit itself to watching the person to whom it is directed from a distance, but which touches them...”²³. It should be mentioned that the authors are of the opinion that the concept of *miser cordia* has received more attention in theological circles than the concept *tenerezza*, in the sense that the last-mentioned concept is according to them usually defined and discussed in terms of the first-mentioned. Some reservations could be tendered regarding their view that the denotation *miser cordia* enjoys priority above *tenerezza*²⁴, but this does not detract from their main argument, namely that the notion of pathos (a term used also by them) does not sufficiently figure as a separate category within the cadres of theology. After all, regardless of the validity of their opinion that the concept *miser cordia* has received more attention than that of *tenerezza*, both designations are subsumed under the unifying description of divine “pathos.” It is worth taking note of the statement with which they conclude their introductory argument that the concept of mercy has not featured to a satisfactory degree in disciplines of theology: “...not only exegesis, but also dogmatics and ethics ‘until today have abandoned [the notion of] compassion in their thoughts’”²⁵.

English equivalent. They translate the other Hebrew term which is analogous to *raḥum*, namely *hannun*, as “miser cordioso”; however, the Italian designation is in its turn closer to the Germanic equivalents “barmherzig/barmhartig” or the Latin and Romance “miser cors/misericordieux/miser cordioso”.

Terminological and translational matters will receive attention later.

¹⁹ “...non si sia stati sufficientemente attenti a questa categoria come categoria teologica propria...”, *ibid*.

²⁰ Rocchetta & Manes, *op.cit.* 10.

²¹ *Op.cit.* 12.

²² The transliterations of the Hebrew nouns are theirs.

²³ “...implica un *páthos*, una partecipazione *effettiva e affettiva*; un amore/amorevolezza, dunque, che non si limita a osservare da lontano colui verso cui si dirige, ma lo tocca...” [*italics in original*], *op.cit.* 30.

²⁴ Some reservations are the following: they do not make clear whether they have the original Hebrew terms which lie behind the Italian terms in mind when they refer to the priority of *miser cordia*; it is not clear whether they take into account that the Hebrew terms may not be consistently represented by the same Italian translations (as indeed they are not – it will be demonstrated in the next chapter that different translations of the Bible, but especially Italian ones, do not use the same terms consistently) and additionally that the Italian translational options may be used interchangeably; they sometimes seem to draw too great a semantic distinction between the two terms, which could rather be seen as a *hendiadys*, although they do mention that the two concepts are “reciprocal and complementary dimensions”, Rocchetta & Manes, *Tenerezza*, p.13,25.

²⁵ “...non solo l’esegesi, ma la stessa dogmatica e la teologia morale ‘fino a oggi hanno bandito la tenerezza dalle loro riflessioni’”, Rocchetta & Manes, *Tenerezza* 13. The partial quotation within their quotation is from H.

The abovementioned three works were singled out because they are in consensus in addressing and discussing the inadequate reception of the theme of mercy within theological sphere. Besides Matthias Franz's study which has already been mentioned and which will receive attention under subsection 4, there are a few other large-scale works which address the topic of mercy, though not mentioning the paucity of literature on the topic²⁶. Even so, the harvest of works on the topic of compassion or mercy remains small, especially if one considers the time span: 12 works since 1932, or leaving Wobbe's work aside, 11 works since 1962²⁷. In addition, articles addressing the general notion of compassion or mercy were found, but the number of articles was likewise found to be surprisingly small, particularly given the period of time covered between the earliest and latest article: 28 readily available articles in a period from 1963 to 2019 (in other words, spanning more than half a century) is a meagre yield²⁸.

Banse, "Il tenere tocco de Dio", *Responsabilità e tenerezza. Percorsi biblici e teologici*, Maria Assunta Sozzi Mancì, ed. (Milaan: Ancora 2001) 82.

²⁶ Nine works were found. In chronological order, they are Joseph Wobbe, "Der Charis-Gedanke bei Paulus" [Monograph], *Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen*, Max Meinertz, ed., Band XIII:3 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1932), predating the chosen *terminus a quo*; Edward Schillebeeckx, *Gerechtigheid en Liefde. Genade en Bevrijding* (Bloemendaal: Nelissen, 1977); Joseph Mouton, *Misère de Dieu* (Paris: Aubier, 1996); Ruth Scoralick, ed., *Das Drama der Barmherzigkeit Gottes*, *Stuttgarter Bibelstudien* 183, Helmut Merklein & Erich Zenger, eds. (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2000); Hermann Spieckermann, *Gottes Liebe zu Israel* [Monograph], *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); Oliver Davies, *A Theology of Compassion: Metaphysics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003); André Birmelé, *L'Horizon de la grâce: la foi chrétienne* (Paris: Cerf, 2013); Jürgen Werbeck, *Gnade* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2013) and John M. G. Barclay, *Paul & the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

²⁷ The author acknowledges that there may be works which have escaped his attention.

²⁸ One must bear in mind that it is not uncomplicated to delineate between articles that are deemed to deal with the grace formula in particular (to be mentioned under point 4) and articles which are considered to deal with the concepts of mercy, compassion, patience and goodness in general. A list of the 28 articles which are perceived as treating the subject in general is given here in chronological order, again with the *proviso* that some articles may have escaped attention: Georg Braumann, "Jesu Erbarmen nach Matthäus", *Theologische Zeitschrift*, vol. 19:5 (Basel: Reinhardt, 1963) 305-317; Hans Klein, "Barmherzigkeit gegenüber den Elenden und Geächteten. Studien zur Botschaft des lukanischen Sonderguts" [Monograph], *BThSt* 10 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1987); Sandro Paolo Carbone, *La misericordia universale die Dio in Rom 11,30-32* [Monograph], *SRB* 23 (Bologna: EDB, 1991); Judith Gundry-Volf, "Spirit, Mercy, and the Other", *Theology Today*, vol. 51:4 (Ephrata: Science Press, 1995) 508-523; Gerhard Bodendorfer, "Die Spannung von Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit in der rabbinischen Auslegung mit Schwerpunkt auf der Psalmeninterpretation", *Das Drama der Barmherzigkeit Gottes*, *Stuttgarter Bibelstudien* (SBS) 183 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2000) 157-192; Christoph Dohmen, "Vom Sinai nach Galiläa. Psalm 103 als Brücke zwischen Juden und Christen", *ibid.* 92-106; Bernd Janowski, "Der barmherzige Richter. Zur Einheit von Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit im Gottesbild des Alten Orients und des Alten Testaments", *ibid.* 33-91; Cilliers Breytenbach, "Der einzige Gott – Vater der Barmherzigkeit", *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift*, Jg. 22, Bd.1 (Berlin: Wichern-Verlag, 2005) 37-54; Alphonso Groenewald, "Exodus, Psalms and Hebrews: A God abounding in steadfast love (Ex. 34:6)", *HTS*, vol. 64:3 (Durbanville: AOSIS Publishing, 2008) 1365-1378; Cilliers Breytenbach, "'Charis' and 'Eleos' in Paul's Letter to the Romans", in *Grace, Reconciliation, Concord*, *SNT* 135 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010) 207-238; Susan Grove Eastman, "Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9-11", *NTS* 56 (Cambridge: CUP, 2010) 367-395; Daniel Johannes Louw, "On facing the God-question in a pastoral theology of compassion: From imperialistic omni-categories to theo-paschitic

1.3 The Grace Formula: Terminology and frequency

As mentioned in advance, in order to structure a survey of literature dealing specifically with aspects of the grace formula, it would be pertinent to discuss two matters with regard to the grace formula here, before presenting a fuller discussion in the next chapter. In the first instance, although Spieckermann's designation of "Gnadenformel" is generally accepted and used in German scholarship, there are several alternative expressions used by English-speaking, but also German-speaking scholars, giving rise to much variety. One example is that the term "Gnadenformel" is rendered in various ways in English: "formula of grace"²⁹, "grace formula"³⁰ or "compassion formula"³¹. Lothar Perlitt considers it a "confessional formula" or "invocation formula"³², Dohmen a "credo formula"³³ and Andersen a "confessional statement"³⁴. Some other variants are "divine attribute formula"³⁵, "Epiphanieformel"³⁶ and "Sinaiformel"/"Sinai formula"³⁷, of which the last two could only be applied to Exodus 34:6, and

pathos-categories", In *die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 49:1, art. #1996 (Durbanville: AOSIS OpenJournals, 2015) 1-15; Paul Gilbert, "Misericordia, virtù dei deboli o dei forti? La vita del vangelo", *Studia Patavina (StPat)* 63:1 (Padua: Facoltà Teologica del Triveneto, 2016) 19-36; Dominik Markl, S.J., "Göttliche Barmherzigkeit im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament", *ZKTh*, vol. 138:3/4 (Innsbruck: Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät, 2016) 289-298; Karl Hefty, "Mercy as 'Experience' of Life", *Theoforum*, vol.47:2 (Ottawa: Peeters, 2016-2017) 287-312; Antonio Miralles, "La misericordia en el rito para reconciliar a un solo penitente", *Scripta Theologica* 48:1, César Izquierdo, ed. (Pamplona: Publicaciones de la Univ. de Navarra, 2016) 113-130; Todd Walatka, "The Principle of Mercy: Jon Sobrino and the Catholic Theological Tradition", *Theological Studies*, vol. 77:1 (Milwaukee: Theological Studies, 2016) 96-117; Catherine E. Clifford, "Mercy: Essence and Mission of the Church", *Theoforum*, vol.47:2 (Ottawa: Peeters, 2016-2017) 213-230; Marine el Hajj, "La miséricorde de Dieu selon Jean de Dalyatha: Homélie 19", *ibid.* 243-257; Gilles Routhier, "La miséricorde: fondement, principe et critère de toute réforme dans/de l'Église", *ibid.* 313-331; Mark Slatter, "Pope Francis's Poor: God's Pedagogy for Mercy", *ibid.* 267-285; Felipe L. Doldan, "La misericordia y la justicia de Dios", *Teología*, vol. LIV no.124 (Buenos Aires: Revista de la Facultad de Teología PUCD, 2017) 9-25; Cory Andrew Labreque, "Catholic Ethics and the Incarnation of Mercy. A Study in Hospitality", *Theoforum*, vol.47:2 (Ottawa: Peeters, 2016-2017) 259-265; Didier Caenepeel, "La logique de la miséricorde dans le discernement moral et pastoral", *Science et Esprit*, vol.70:2 (Ottawa/Montréal: CUD, 2018) 167-179; Éline Champagne, "Les mains de la miséricorde. Éléments d'une spiritualité agissante", *ibid.* 153-165; Michel Gourgues, "La miséricorde en trois temps. Le témoignage de Luc", *ibid.* 139-152; Haim Shapira, "The Virtue of Mercy to Maimonides: Ethics, Law, and Theology", *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol 111:4 (New York: CUP 2018) 559-585 and Michel Proulx, "Plaidoyer satirique pour un décloisonnement des frontières. La théologie inclusive du livre de Jonas", *Science et Esprit*, Vol. 71/3 (Ottawa: Collège universitaire dominicain 2019) 335-345.

²⁹ E.g. Alessandro Coniglio, "'Gracious and Merciful is Yhwh...' (Psalm 145:8): The Quotation of Exodus 34:6 in Psalm 145 and Its Role in the Holistic Design of the Psalter", *Liber Annuus* 67 (Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 2017) 30, fn.6.

³⁰ E.g. Adam D. Hensley, *Covenant Relationships and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018) 232, 244.

³¹ Horace Simian-Yofre, article "*rah^amîm...*", *ThDOT*, vol.XII (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004) 449.

³² *Bekennnisformel, Anrufungsformel*, Lothar Perlitt, *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament*, WMANT 36 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969) 214.

³³ "Credo-Formulierung", Christoph Dohmen, *Exodus 19-40: Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament*, Erich Zenger, ed. (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 2004) 354.

³⁴ Bernhard W. Andersen, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999) 59.

³⁵ Preferred by Coniglio, art.cit. 30.

³⁶ Sigmund Mowinkel, *Erwägungen zur Pentateuch Quellenfrage* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012) 96.

³⁷ Erich Zenger, *Die Nacht wird leuchten wie der Tag. Psalmenauslegungen* (Freiburg: Herder 1997) 418.

not to the other six occurrences of the formula. “Divine attribute formula” is an apt description, but apart from the fact that it is rather unwieldy, another reservation that one could have with the usage of this term is that it is susceptible of an abstract and static interpretation of God, which betrays the influence of Hellenistic, and not Hebrew thought categories. As there are different versions on offer in any case, the present author should like to take the liberty of suggesting yet another possible formulation, namely “mercy motto”. Apart from the fact that it is a short and succinct phrase, easy to say, it does as much justice to the content and meaning of the phrase than that of Spieckermann’s. Furthermore, “motto” has more or less the same semantic connotation than “formula”³⁸.

Regarding the second matter concerning the mercy motto, there are several phrases in the Old Testament which contain some, but not all the epithets of the formula, but nevertheless seem to be abbreviated or “shorthand” versions of the grace formula³⁹. Unanimity does not exist amongst scholars on how many such abbreviated instances of the formula appear in the Old Testament⁴⁰. The present author takes the following citations as abbreviated versions of

³⁸ Another attractive option would be “doxological formula”, or even “doxological dictum” since both meanings of *doxa*, “confession” and “praise”, would then very fittingly be incorporated into the terminology. It is not feasible to conceive of this formula without engaging with both notions. It is only in Jonah 4:2 where the formula acquires a different application (to be discussed later).

³⁹ The matter could also be formulated in a different way, namely by stating that the grace formula in its full guise is a “longhand” form of the shorter versions. However, the focus of this study is not a tradition- or redaction-historical investigation which concerns itself with diachronic processes. The focus is rather on the grace formula as it stands, regardless of its prehistory; see further discussion in ch. 2, point 2.1, p. 26-27. Nevertheless, to the degree that it might be relevant, insights gleaned from a *traditions- or redaktionsgeschichtliche* approach will be considered, such as Robert Claude Dentan’s view that the formula of grace stems from Israel’s Wisdom literature; Robert C. Dentan, “The literary affinities of Exodus xxxiv 6f.”, *Vetus Testamentum* (VT) 13 (Leiden: Brill, 1963) 34-51. Also cf. Josef Scharbert, “Formgeschichte und Exegese von Ex 34,6f und seiner Parallelen”, *Biblica*, vol. 38:2 (1957) 130-150, and Lothar Perlitt, *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969) 203-216.

⁴⁰ For example: Horace Simian-Yofre, “*rah^amim*...”, 448 states that there are 11 such occurrences, but he does not include Psalm 116:5, which qualifies without much doubt as a shorthand representative of the grace formula (“The Lord is merciful and righteous, our God is compassionate”). Alphonso Groenewald, referring to John I. Durham, *Exodus*, World Bible Commentary, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987) 453, states that there are 8 appearances of the grace formula, but two of the instances cited, Num. 14:18 and Nahum 1:3, are clearly shortened forms and cannot be accorded the status of the full formula. In addition, Ex.34:6 containing the full formula has not been included in the tally of “8”, although it forms part of his discussion; A. Groenewald, “Exodus, Psalms and Hebrews: A God abounding in steadfast love (Ex. 34:6)”, HTS vol. 64:3 (Durbanville: AOSIS Publishing, 2008) 1365-1378. Anna Elise Zerneck, “Gnadenformel”, *Das Wissenschaftliche Bibellexikon im Internet* (www.wibilex.de, 2015) provides the biggest tally of “shorthand” forms, namely 25. However, many inclusions, such as Ex.20:5f., Deut.4:31, 5:9f., 7:9f., Neh.1:5, Pss. 78:38, 86:5, 99:8, Is.48:9, 54:7f., Jer.15:15, 32:18, Dan. 9:4, Nah.1:2f. and Sir.5:4 are questionable, as they contain only one of the constituent elements of the full formula or they become too long/many-worded to qualify as a formula which *per se* has a concise and condensed character. This would bring her count down to 10. On the other hand, besides the Wisdom of Sirach 2:11 there are also instances in other Jewish documents as well as (Christian) patristic literature in which the full or shortened formula occurs, but which neither Zerneck nor Franz mentions, such as Prayer Azar. vs.3, Bar. 2:27, 1 Clem. 9:1, 18:2, 60:1, 1 Macc. 3:44, Prayer Man. 1:7a, 1:7b, Pss. Sol. 5:2, 5:15, 8:28, 10:7, 18:1, Test. Zeb. 9:7, Wisd. Sol. 15:11. See Table 12, Chapter 6, page 236.

the mercy motto: containing the terms “merciful” (רַחוּם) and “compassionate” (חַנּוּן) are 2 Chronicles 30:9, Nehemiah 9:31, Psalms 111:4b, 112:4b (but referring to the just man, not to God), 116:5 and Isaiah 30:18⁴¹. Containing the concepts “patient/long-suffering” (אָפּוּס אָרְךָ) and “full of loyal love” (וְרַב־חֶסֶד) or variants are Numeri 14:18 and Micah 7:18⁴².

1.4 Survey of literature with the grace formula as subject

The discussion will now be directed to a synopsis of monographs and articles which have the grace formula as particular focus. The only monograph that could be found was the study by Matthias Franz previously mentioned. He confined his research to the mercy motto in Exodus 34:6 (but including verse 7) and its Old Testament and extrabiblical parallels (although the only extrabiblical occurrence that he cites is Sirach 2:11). His study is valuable, because it fixes scholarly attention on a particular instance of the mercy motto and also reinforces the surmise that the mercy motto has not received sufficient regard in scholarly circles. He gives an overview of monographs and articles which he had consulted, but there are a few large-scale works that are not included in his synopsis⁴³. Even though Birmelé’s work (2013) and possibly that of Davies’ (2003) may postdate the publication of Franz’s study, there would still be at least six of the nine monographs mentioned in footnote 25 above that are not included in Franz’s survey. There are also many articles within Franz’s time-span that have not been considered. One must of course bear in mind that the selection of relevant articles is a matter of discretion whether the title/subject of the article qualifies it as a study of the mercy motto or

⁴¹ With both Ps. 116:5 and Is. 30:18 containing declensions of *vrhm* and *vhnn* which differ from the inflections used in the standard formula; חַנּוּן יְהוָה וְצַדִּיק וְאֱלֹהֵינוּ מְרַחוּם (Ps. 116:5), לְרַחוּמֶם יְהוָה לְחַנּוּנֶם לְרַחוּמֶם (Is. 30:18).

⁴² The fact that these phrases containing only some of the epithets of the grace formula are indeed short versions of the mercy motto speaks most clearly from the narrative recital in Neh. 9:6-31. In verse 17, the motto is found in its full form; in verse 31, we find an abbreviated version (“You are a merciful and compassionate God”) which is clearly an allusion to the full motto in verse 17, with which it possibly forms a kind of *inclusio*, bracketing the section from verse 17b-31. There is a clear “turn” from “narrative confession” to supplication in verse 32.

⁴³ Franz’s list of literature contains 2 books and 9 articles or excerpts from books (here given in chronological order): Joseph Scharbert, “Formgeschichte und Exegese von Ex 34,6f und seiner Parallelen”, *Biblica* 38 (1957) 130-150; Robert Claude Dentan, “The literary affinities of Ex 34,6f”, *VT* 13 (1963) 34-51; Lothar Peritt, “Bundestheologie im Alten Testament”, *WMANT* 36 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1969) 203-232; the respective entries of the terms of the mercy motto in the *THAT*(1971-75) and the *ThWAT*(1973-2000); Jörg Jeremias, “Die Reue Gottes. Aspekte alttestamentlicher Gottesvorstellung”, *BThSt* 31 [given by Franz p.282 as *Biblische Studien*, which is the original publication (1975)] (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1975) 94-96; Ludwig Schmidt, “De Deo”, *BZAW* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter 1976) 89-101; Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, (Oxford: OUP 1985) 335-350; Erik Aurelius, *Der Fürbitter Israels. Eine Studie zum Mosebild im Alten Testament*, *CB.OT* 27 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell 1988); Hermann Spieckermann, “Barmherzig und gnädig ist der Herr...”, *ZAW* 102 (1990) 1-18; Thomas Raitt, “Why does God forgive?”, *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 13 (1991) 38-58; Walter Brueggemann, “Crisis-Evoked, Crisis-Resolving Speech”, *BTB* 24 (1994) 95-105; Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament. Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, Minneapolis (1998) 145-266; Ruth Scoralick, ed., *Das Drama der Barmherzigkeit Gottes*, SBS 183 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2000). In addition, Franz mentions contributions by Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger as editors/authors of commentaries on the Psalms (Pss. 1-50: Neue Echter Bibel, Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993, and Pss. 51-100: HTK, Freiburg: Herder, 2000).

not⁴⁴. Finally, apart from articles which have the general concept of mercy as subject and have been published after Franz's terminating date, there are also some articles post-dating Franz's study which deal more specifically with aspects of the mercy motto⁴⁵. Some of Franz's insights into the mercy motto will be incorporated into the present study; applicable to the present discussion is his findings regarding the amount of research done with regard to the topic of mercy. Having reviewed three monographs and nine articles spanning 66 years (1957-2002), he concluded that studies about wordings of grace in the Old Testament have been sporadic, incomplete and unsystematic, with the result that these wordings have not enjoyed proper reception or presentation in scholarly circles: "The formulations of the compassionate and merciful God in the Old Testament have often been touched upon in research...[But] a systematic presentation is still outstanding, repeatedly having been advocated, but until now not yet been attempted"⁴⁶.

1.5 Survey of literature: Conclusions

In section 2, the conclusions to which three authors have come regarding the little attention devoted to the general topic of mercy were cited. In section 1, Spieckermann's wish for a more prominent place to be accorded the mercy motto was noted, and in the above section, Franz's inference regarding the mercy motto has finally been tabled. Though some doubts may be raised about his statement, given the fact that he had evidently not consulted a great array of works on the subject, his rather small array of works may to the contrary be proof in itself of his statement. His assertion, and coincidentally also the assertions of the other authors mentioned here, could be statistically supported in the following way: 13 monographs and 46

⁴⁴ In addition to articles up to the present mentioned under footnote 26, four articles from within the period delineated in Franz's study, but not sourced by him, were found, here listed in chronological order:

A. Vandenbunder, "De Barmhartige God", Col.Brug., vol. 5:1 (Brugge/Gent: Seminarie, 1959); Alfred Jepsen, "Gnade und Barmherzigkeit im Alten Testament", KuD 7:4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961); Edgar Kellenberger, *häsäd wä^ömät als Ausdruck einer Glaubenserfahrung*, AThANT 69 (Zürich: TVZ, 1982) and Thomas B. Dozeman, "Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Yahweh's Gracious and Compassionate Character", JBL 108/2, John J. Collins, ed. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

⁴⁵ Friedhelm Hartenstein, "Die Zumutung des barmherzigen Gottes. Die Theologie des Jonabuches im Licht der Urgeschichte Gen 1-11", *Ex oriente Lux. Studien zur Theologie des Alten Testaments. FS Rüdiger Lux*, Angelika Berlejung & Raik Heckl, eds. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012) 435-455; José Luis Barriocanal, "La tensión latente en la revelación del ser de Dios: Ex 34,6-7 y su relectura en el libro de los Doce", *Scripta Theologica*, vol. 48:2, C. Izquierdo, ed. (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2016) 381-403; Jordi Cervera i Valls, "Iahvè, Déu misericordiós i just: d'Èxode 34,6-7 a les Tretze middot", *RCatT* 41/2 (Barcelona: Ediciones Gráficas Rey, 2016) 465-495; Carlos Granados García, "Misericordia y alianza en Ex 34,6-7", *Scripta Theologica* 48:1 (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2016) 99-111 and Alessandro Coniglio, "'Gracious and Merciful is Yhwh...' (Psalm 145:8): The Quotation of Exodus 34:6 in Psalm 145 and Its Role in the Holistic Design of the Psalter", *Liber Annuus* 67 (Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 2017) 29-50.

⁴⁶ Die Formulierungen vom barmherzigen und gnädigen Gott im Alten Testament wurden in der Forschung oft berührt...Eine systematische Darstellung steht noch aus. Sie wurde wiederholt gefördert, ist bisher jedoch nicht versucht worden", Franz, *Der barmherzige Gott* 13.

articles (some of which are excerpts from monographs) have so far been catalogued in this chapter, spanning a period of roughly 60 years (if Wobbe's work of 1932 is omitted). If this output is compared to the total yield of theological works and articles that have seen the light in the same period, a sobering picture arises. For what it is worth, this sobering picture could be illustrated in the following statistical way: the Maurits Sabbe theological library at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven has an array of more than 600 different journals in its Journal Collection. At a conservative estimate, most journals would appear at least twice yearly and would as a rule not contain fewer than 4 articles. The library's monthly acquisition of books also numbers in the dozens. If a large statistical margin of safety is built in by assuming that there are only 400 different journals *worldwide* which each publishes only 8 articles per year, and by granting that this number of journals already existed from 1960, it means that the total of articles with some subject relating to theology that have been published in the past six decades numbers 192000 – out of which 46 were articles in some way concerned with the concept of God's mercy or with the mercy motto. This gives a statistical proportion of 0,000239% which is beyond belief. Additionally: assuming that the worldwide monthly output of theological monographs is the same than this library's monthly number of books acquired (which it surely is not), and conservatively estimating the monthly number of new works to be 50, it would mean that 36000 theological works have seen the light since 1960 – out of which 13 have been monographs concerned with God's mercy, which gives a statistical proportion of 0.000361 %. Even if statistics were not deemed as sufficient or decisive to argue a case, it would be hard to ignore or dismiss the reality which is reflected in these statistics; sometimes "statistics speak louder than words." The inevitable conclusion is that, as authors like Heschel, Kasper, Rocchetta & Manes, Spieckermann and Franz have argued, the notions of God's compassion in general or the usage of the mercy motto in particular do indeed occupy an inferior and undeserved position within the categories and sub-categories of theology.

1.6 Reasons for the inadequate reception of the mercy motto

There is a noticeable aspect about the works by Heschel, Kasper and Rocchetta & Manes which were discussed above, an aspect noticeable because of its absence: none of the three works refers to the mercy motto or devotes space to a discussion of the formula. This absence is also glaring in the case of the work of Schillebeeckx, which is more than 900 pages long. If the general notions of God's mercy, pity and compassion have not enjoyed adequate reception in theology, the same is much truer in the case of the mercy motto. This is a deplorable situation, as this formula is an encapsulation and compendium of God's attributes and

activities like no other in the Old Testament⁴⁷. The inevitable question is what reasons there could be for the deficient reception of the mercy motto within theological disciplines and subdisciplines such as general theologies and dogmatics about God and hermeneutical studies. The paucity of theological reflection on the topic of mercy in general or the mercy motto in particular is a self-evident symptom. However, in the opinion of the present writer – an opinion submitted to more competent scholars for scrutiny – a significant contributory reason is that too dominant a position is occupied in Old Testament theologies and dogmatics (and to an extent also within neotestamentic domain) by abstract, static thought categories when conceiving of the character of God, categories of thought which stem from Greek or Athenian thinking and which are not “idiomatic” (typical or characteristic) to the Hebrew way of thinking⁴⁸. It is one of the contentions of this study that metaphysical or ontological modes of thinking have a stifling influence on Western theology, dogmatics and hermeneutics and either discourage free and fruitful scholarly discussion about the divine characteristics, and/or encourage an abstractionist or analytic way of constructing categories of thought about God. These categories may be seen as an intellectual and conceptual straitjacket inhibiting discourses on God’s mercy and compassion. An attempt will be made to validate this contention by firstly referring to the tendency to abstraction within Old Testament theologies in general, secondly assessing modes of thought with respect to a dogmatics about God, and finally narrowing the focus by investigating the ways of speaking about the “attributes” of God, attributes which are also incorporated into the mercy motto.

1.6.1 Abstract thought operative within Old Testament theology

One of the problems of Old Testament theology is that it has been too cognitive and ideational, paying insufficient attention to the ways of Israel’s rhetoric.⁴⁹

When a survey of Old Testament theologies is undertaken, it transpires that in their search for a “Mitte” or central message of the Old Testament, theologians often resort to abstract

⁴⁷ Two other recurrent wordings in the OT about God’s qualities and deeds are the following *ritornelli*: “love and loyalty”/“goodness and constancy” (*hesed w’emet*), appearing 30 times, and “his goodness is everlasting” (*ʾēlām ḥasdō*) which appears 43 times.

⁴⁸ This view should be placed in context: the Hellenistic tendency in theological thought is mainly a phenomenon of Western theology. It is, for example, to a great extent not applicable to the Eastern/Orthodox or the African tradition of thinking about God.

⁴⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press 1997) 119 fn. 5. Also cf. Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Bd.1, *Die Entstehung des Kirchlichen Dogmas* (Freiburg, 1888) 18: dogma is “in seiner Conception und in seinem Ausbau ein Werk des griechischen Geistes auf dem Boden des Evangeliums” (“in its conception and in its development a product of the Greek spirit on the soil of the Gospel”), quoted in Arnold Huijgen & Arie Versluis, “Our God is One”, *Reading and Listening; Meeting God in Many Texts*, Festschrift Eric Peels, Jaap Dekker & Gert Kwakkel, eds., ACEBT-SS 16 (Bergambacht: Uitgeverij ZVM, 2018) 223.

concepts to formulate such a theme or themes. As mentioned under section 2, Abraham Heschel had already argued in 1962 that statements about God's "pathos" should have priority to conceptual notions wording his qualities. A few years later (1970), Gerhard von Rad voiced similar reservations about such a type of conceptual approach. In his *Theology of the Old Testament*, he points out that Israel's way of theologising, which he describes as "theological activity", consisted of constantly-renewed efforts to make the salvific deeds of God relevant for each new situation in which Israel found itself. He points out how these efforts crystallised into "credal statements", worded confessions which gradually grew in format as more wordings accrued to these narratives. In the light of these confessional narratives von Rad comes to the following verdict: "A theology which attempts to grasp the content of the Old Testament under the heading of various doctrines (the doctrine of God, the doctrine of man, etc.) cannot do justice to these credal statements which are completely tied up with history, or to this grounding of Israel's faith upon a few divine acts of salvation and the effort to gain an ever new understanding of them"⁵⁰. This is the reason why von Rad has certain reservations about Walther Eichrodt's covenant model, for example, which according to him is conceived too much in terms of "thematic" or "doctrinary" categories⁵¹.

Since then, several scholars within the disciplines of Old and New Testament or Biblical theology have voiced the opinion that attempts to outline a theology of the Old/New Testament or a Systematic theology should move away from the usage of static and abstract concepts. Brueggemann, whose historical survey of theologians' search for a unifying "centre" or an all-encompassing theme for the message of the Old Testament led him to the conclusion cited above, is one such a voice. Two more voices could be taken as representative of this school of thought. The first is the Swiss theologian Hans Heinrich Schmid. In an article addressing the question of a centre of the Old Testament, he states the following: "Other descriptions of the centre of the Old Testament are subject to the same structural problematic, whether it is the covenant (Eichrodt), God as Lord (Köhler), the revelation of the Name of God (Zimmerli), divine rule and divine community (Fohrer), or First Commandment and Events (Schmidt), which all exhibit a nominal speech structure..."⁵².

⁵⁰ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd 1970) vi.

⁵¹ Cf. Brueggemann, *Theology* 34: "...doctrinal, thematic accents..."

⁵² "Unter der gleichen strukturellen Problematik stehen auch andere Beschreibungen der Mitte des Alten Testaments, sei es der Bund (Eichrodt), Gott als Herr (Köhler), die Namensoffenbarung Jahwes (Zimmerli), Gottesherrschaft und Gottesgemeinschaft (Fohrer), oder erstes Gebot und Geschichte (Schmidt), die alle die nämliche Sprachstruktur aufweisen...", H.H. Schmid, "'Ich will euer Gott sein, und ihr sollt mein Volk sein'. Die sogenannte Bundesformel und die Frage nach der Mitte des Alten Testaments", in *Kirche. Festschrift für Günther Bornkamm zum 75. Geburtstag*, Dieter Lührmann & Georg Strecker, eds. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980) 24.

With the phrases “structural problematic” and “nominal speech structure”, Schmid has in mind the tendency to static, nominalistic theological reflection in which passive and abstract nouns (*nomina*) are used to present theological themes, a tendency which typified many, if not most, of the theologies of the Old Testament or dogmatic reflections on the character of God up to the recent past⁵³. A second Old Testament theologian who voices a similar opinion is Claus Westermann. He refers to “nominal concepts” (again the abstract nouns) which are employed to define theological themes, such as “covenant”, “election” and “salvation history”, but which in the process relinquish the verbal and active character of Old Testament speech. Westermann takes the abstract noun “revelation”, which is promulgated by Wolfhart Pannenberg as key to the message of the Old Testament or the biblical message, and describes it as a fitting representative of these abstract categories of thought: “This is a typical example of nominalistic thinking which proceeds from general concepts and intends to approach biblical facts through conceptual distinctions”⁵⁴.

The following observations could be made in summary: the tendency to abstraction which is discernible within theologies of the Old Testament could by and large be ascribed to the lasting influence of Greek or Athenian classifications of thought in which idealising conceptions are operative. This type of “Western” intellectual activity does not adequately take into account how unlike and direct the Hebrew experience of reality is, and how active and verbal the Hebrew wording of this reality is. One of the objectives of the present study is precisely an endeavour to convince the reader that the mercy motto may be a corrective for the way in which Western-oriented Old and New Testament theologies and dogmatics are constructed on abstract concepts, by showing that the mercy motto is not conceived nominally, but is rather the residue of a concrete, verbal way of speaking about God. Its speech is therefore also more idiomatic to the language of the Old Testament than some static theological utterances about God. This brings us to the second subsection.

1.6.2 Abstract thought operative within dogmatics about God

Designing a doctrine of God in terms of ontological categories has been a centuries-long Western theological enterprise. The result of this preoccupation could to a greater or lesser extent be typified as “theontology”, as it exhibits the conceptual heritage of the Greek tradition of analytical/non-synthetical and idealising thinking. This type of intellectualising, performed within the matrix of abstract categories, is alien to the Hebrew and rabbinic way of thinking or

⁵³ Again, it should be acknowledged that his remarks are not necessarily applicable to other theological traditions outside the Western tradition.

⁵⁴ Claus Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox 1982) 27.

speaking of God⁵⁵. Oliver Davies refers to early rabbinic interpretations of the Divine Name “I am” (אֲנִי־אֵלֹהִים) in Exodus 3:14 “...in which an implicit divine ‘ontology’ of a very different structure from that of Greek tradition was proposed” and calls his own reflection on divine compassion “a contestation of the received ‘Athenian’ reading of Ex. 3.14”⁵⁶. In a similar vein, Rocchetta & Manes assert that the Divine Name of Exodus 3:14 should not be interpreted in an ontological way, but rather as witnessing the activity of God⁵⁷. Heschel creates an interesting expression in connection with an ontological approach to a doctrine of God, namely “The Ontocentric Predicament” which he explains as follows: “The biblical man does not begin with being, but with the surprise of being. The biblical man is free of what may be called the ontocentric predicament. Being is not *all* to him”⁵⁸.

A survey of works devoted to thinking about God, from as early as the patristic era (specifically those Church Fathers who engaged with Hellenistic ways of thinking, like Clement of Alexandria, and later Augustine) via the Scholastic school of thought in the Middle Ages, up to the present, makes it evident that Western theological thought has promulgated a thinking about God that is conceived in abstract, idealist and static terms⁵⁹. A few examples would suffice: as early as in Timothy 1:17, God is described with the following apophatic terms: “immortal” (ἀφθάρτω, Dative: also as possessing ἀθανασίαν in 1 Timothy 6:16) and “invisible” (ἀόρατω, Dative). Ignatius, third bishop of Antioch, in a letter to Polycarp (*circa* 100 A.D.) calls God “the timeless” (τὸν ἄχρονον), “the invisible” (τὸν ἀόρατον), “the untouchable” (τὸν ἀψηλάφητον) and “the apathetic/unsuffering” (τὸν ἀπαθητὴν)⁶⁰, all four of which again are apophatic terms. The exegesis of the Divine Name in Exodus 3:14 has already been referred to. Augustine, when writing about the “being” of God as it is revealed in the divine Self-revelation in Exodus 3:14 states that God therefore is “...a substance, or if it could be even better described, essence, which the Greeks call *ousia* [...] And therefore the only unchangeable substance or essence is that which is God, to Whom assuredly being itself –

⁵⁵ As already mentioned, it is also to a significant extent alien to Orthodox and other non-Western theological traditions.

⁵⁶ Davies, *A Theology of Compassion: Metaphysics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2003) xxi. He describes his contribution as “... a corrective, pragmatic reorientation of the classical Western metaphysical tradition in the light of early Jewish modes of theological and ‘metaphysical’ reasoning...”; *ibid.* His use of terms like “theological” and “metaphysical” in reference to Jewish thinking is perhaps somewhat problematic, since these abstract adjectives could be seen precisely as relicts of the Athenian thought tradition.

⁵⁷ Rocchetta & Manes, *Tenerezza* 8. “Witness”: *attestazione*, “activity”: *esserci*.

⁵⁸ Heschel, *Prophets* II 43.

⁵⁹ A very early impetus for thinking about God in abstract, ontological terms may have been the Septuagint’s translation of Ex.3:14 as ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν, “I am the Being”. This surmise will be followed up in chapter 2.

⁶⁰ Ignatius to Polycarp III.2, *The Apostolic Fathers I*, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1975) 270.

after which “essence” is named - most fully and truly belongs”⁶¹. One could produce examples *ad infinitum*, but the given examples should suffice. What could be added, is the observation that the entire concept of “being” or “existence” is alien to the Jewish and midrashic way of thinking about God:

If one wanted to arrange the rabbis under the keywords of the existence of God, one would to some degree have to take into account that they are not at all familiar with the abstract concept of existence – in ancient times, there was no Hebrew or Aramaic equivalent. The rabbis speak of God’s existence to the extent that they describe his activity.⁶²

This line of reasoning could be extended: in Western theological tradition, it is not only God’s being which is often defined in static and idealist terms (as has been shown in the previous paragraph), but also his attributes, which are often described in terms of abstract concepts such as self-sufficiency, immutability, omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. These abstract nouns have the negative potential to render God into a vague, abstract and passive “entity.” There is another way to elucidate this tendency to abstraction: in an analogy to the grammatical and syntactical notion of transitive and intransitive verbs (with the last category not having a direct or indirect object), these nouns could all be termed “intransitive”, as they do not signify an orientation of God towards somebody or something else. Any of these terms (including “self-sufficiency” itself) are self-sufficient in a negative sense, conveying the notion that God is a being (en)closed in Himself, not engaged in any transitive activity directed towards humans. Even the collective terms used to class the attributes of God betray the tendency to abstraction: “aseic” is the adjective used to describe the qualities of God as He is in Himself (*a se*) – an abstract Latin term, and “apophatic” is the adjective used to name the terms describing what God is not – an abstract Greek designation. It is in the light of this inclination towards abstract and “intransitive” terminology regarding God that Ron Highfield refers to some contemporary theological theologians who want to dispense with terms like “attributes/perfections, properties, characteristics, appellations, virtues...” when developing a

⁶¹ “Est...substantia, vel, si melius hoc appellatur, essentia, quam Graeces οὐσία vocant...Et ideo sola est incommutabilis substantia vel essentia, quae Deus est, cui profecto ipsum esse, unde essentia nominata est, maxime ac verissimi competit”, *De Civitate Dei*, Bk. V.2.iii, <http://www.augustinus.it/latino/trinita/index2.htm>. Also cited by Davies, op.cit. 78 and in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture; Old Testament III; Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, Joseph T. Lienhard, ed. (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001) 22.

⁶² “So würde man etwa, wenn man die Rabbinen unter die Befürworter der Existenz Gottes einreihen wollte, zugleich beachten müssen, daß sie den abstrakten Begriff der Existenz gar nicht kennen – es gab in der Antike dafür kein hebräisches oder aramäisches Äquivalent. Die Rabbinen sprechen von der Existenz Gottes, indem sie sein Wirken beschreiben”, Hans-Jürgen Becker, “Einheit und Namen Gottes im rabbinischen Judentum”, *Götterbilder. Gottesbilder. Weltbilder*, Bd. II, R. G. Kratz & H. Spieckermann, eds. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 154.

doctrine of God, in order not to devalue the personhood of God: “Many modern theologians refuse these terms, arguing that they depersonalize God by turning our attention away from the economy of salvation toward abstract qualities in an impersonal divine nature...”⁶³. One could add that, within such an idealising frame of mind, it would take only a small conceptual step to enter into the sphere of speculation about God. To mention but one example: Highfield reviews the reformed/Protestant tradition of thought regarding the doctrine of God and refers to Barth and other Dogmatic theologians who assert that God is knowable because his knowledge of Himself is perfect (in other words because He possesses the aseic quality of perfect self-knowledge). Whatever the status of such an assertion, and whatever the reverence in which such views may be held within Western, or more specifically within reformed theological tradition, and regardless of whether this statements hold true or not, the likelihood exists that, within Judaic, Orthodox or African circles, such statements would be considered atypical, unidiomatic and alien, the product of speculative and deductive thought⁶⁴.

One could state that the result of a tendency to abstract, analytic and deductive thought, as opposed to a more midrashic type of practical, synthetic and inductive thinking, is that our understanding of God undergoes a process of “sublimation”, in which a concrete, practical way of thinking about God gives way to a notion of divine insubstantiality and evanescence. Abstraction yields to further abstraction: we have already seen that a predisposition to abstraction could lead to a depersonalising of God, in other words to a more abstract, intransitive and static notion of God⁶⁵. The age-old controversy regarding divine passibility versus divine impassibility is another example: it is to a considerable extent the result of a thought process which starts with the aseic notion of God’s immutability, and which almost inevitably ends with the unavoidable and strictly logical (another inherited Greek concept) conclusion that the divine attribute of immutability implies divine impassibility; after all, from a purely rational standpoint immutability and passibility are not reconcilable⁶⁶. The procession

⁶³ Ronald C. Highfield, *Great is the Lord: Theology for the Praise of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2008) 145.

⁶⁴ John of Damascus starts chapter 1 of his work *The Orthodox Faith* with the heading “That the Deity is incomprehensible, and that we ought not to pry into and meddle with the things that have not been delivered to us by the holy Prophets, and Apostles, and Evangelists”, John of Damascus, *Anti-Nicene Fathers* (ANF) 2.ix; cited by Highfield, *Great is the Lord* 143.

⁶⁵ Vincent Brümmer states that most of the “comprehensive concepts” of God’s love developed within the Christian tradition are “attitudinal” rather than “relational”; Brümmer, “Bestowed Fellowship. On the Love of God”, *Understanding the Attributes of God*, G. van der Brink & M. Sarot, eds. (Paderborn: Peter Lang, 1999) 35.

⁶⁶ Not only Christian scholastics of the medieval era, such as Thomas Aquinas, but also Hellenistic and medieval Jewish scholastic thinkers like Philo of Alexandria, the poet Judah Halevi and the philosopher Maimonides, as well as later philosophers like Spinoza, Descartes and Kant were occupied with this issue. The issue is still active to a greater or lesser extent within contemporary Protestant theology, with “binaries” like “propassibility” and “impassibility” and labels like “patripassionites” and “theopaschites” which are sometimes given to theologians like Jürgen Moltmann or Geddes MacGregor; cf. Warren McWilliams, *The Passion of God. Divine Suffering in Contemporary Protestant Theology* (Macon: Mercer University Press 1985).

from the initial posing of an abstract term to its eventual intellectual ramifications could be described as a concatenation of abstract concepts which link after link lead to even more remote abstraction. Heschel's pithy observation on this issue could serve as conclusion: "Impressive as is the thought that God is too sublime to be affected by events on this insignificant planet, it stems from a line of reasoning about a God derived from abstraction"⁶⁷.

In the final evaluation, the two divergent ways of thinking that were described above, namely the Hebrew versus the Athenian way of thinking, are representative of either a more personal, or a more impersonal way of thinking and speaking about God. This dualism has time and again surfaced⁶⁸ and illuminates another aspect of a doctrine about God: partly in reaction to the Athenian modes of thought in dogmatics, theologians like Paul Tillich *cum suis* sought to find new ways of expressing the character and nature of God, for example describing God as the "Depth" and "Ground" of all being⁶⁹. The same metaphor is employed by a more recent theologian, Armin Kreiner, when he makes the statement that one could conceive of God as being the "creative Ground of all reality"⁷⁰. The theologian Gordon Kaufman may serve as last representative example of this search for a new language about God: he postulates God as the "unifying basis in the world process", the "reality underlying the universe" and the "highest creativity"⁷¹. One has to say that there is some irony in these honest efforts to seek new ways of speaking about and understanding God, since the terms coined by such theologians may have an effect opposite to the intended one: they end up speaking about God in sub-personal terms ("Ground", "Depth", "Force/Power", "Unity Basis") and thus almost inexorably contribute

⁶⁷ Heschel, *Prophets II* 39. It may at this point be fitting to mention that an Athenian conception of God does not only have implications for "abstract" (for want of a better word) disciplines of theology, like theologies of the Old and New Testament or dogmatics, but e.g. also for a pastoral theology. In an article, "On facing the God-question in a pastoral theology of compassion: From imperialistic omni-categories to theo-paschitic pathos-categories", In *die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 49:1, art. #1996 (Durbanville: AOSIS OpenJournals, 2015) 1-15, Daniel Louw points out the disadvantages of a pastoral approach to suffering if it proceeds from static and ontological or metaphysical conceptions regarding God. He proposes "dynamics of pathos categories" in the place of the traditional Western, Hellenistic categories of thought in order to have a pastorate that proceeds from the practical notion of compassion. There are a few debatable matters about the article: apart from the incorrect transliteration of אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדַּי ('el Saddaj instead of Shaddai; it is ש and not ש) he believes *splanchna* to denote "compassion", but the Greek noun standing on its own never has this meaning; it needs to be joined to a concept like *eleos* or *oiktirmoi* to signify "deep pity"; only the verb *splanchnizomai* standing on its own has the meaning of "being compassionate" (see chapter 4, subsection 4.2.2.3). Nevertheless, it is an important contribution from the field of pastoral theology.

⁶⁸ In the opinion of Herman-Emiel Mertens, the question whether God is a person, or an impersonal power, is "today's number one question" (admittedly his "today" is 1994), Mertens, "Re-thinking God today", *Naming God Today*. H.-E. Mertens & Lieven Boeve, eds. (Leuven: Peeters 1994) 29.

⁶⁹ "...der Name dieser unendlichen Tiefe und dieses unerschöpflichen Grundes alles Seins ist *Gott*. Jene Tiefe ist es, die mit *Gott* gemeint ist", Paul Tillich, "In der Tiefe ist Wahrheit", *Religiöse Reden* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter 1987) 55.

⁷⁰ "Der schöpferische Grund aller Wirklichkeit"; Armin Kreiner, *Das wahre Antlitz Gottes: oder was wir meinen, wenn wir Gott sagen* (Freiburg: Herder 2006) 244.

⁷¹ Gordon Kaufman, *God-Mystery-Diversity: Christian Theology in a Pluralistic World* (Minneapolis: Fortress 1996) 107.

to an alien and impersonal notion of God⁷². If there is a wish or a trend in theology to move away from personal speech about God, then in the present writer's opinion the only alternative is to replace it with supra-personal, not sub-personal speech. Whether such supra-personal speech could ever exist or be invented is an open question. At C.S. Lewis, one could possibly resolve the issue by stating the following: "God is much more than a Person, but also nothing less", which would have as corollary that any endeavour to speak about God in supra-personal terms is in order, provided He is not eventually spoken of in less than personal terms. In the next chapter, an attempt will be made to show how the mercy motto could also serve as a hermeneutical key regarding this issue.

There is one other effect of the tendency to abstract, Athenian thinking within a doctrine of God that could be pointed out, namely that it often results in dualistic thinking (a mode which is present in Medieval scholastic thought as well). An illustration of this dualism is the following: "...man's relationship to Yahweh as it is affirmed in the Old Testament...[is] to be viewed in a dual way, namely in terms of Yahweh's activity as well as his character, of his φύσις or *natura*"⁷³. Apart from the dualism that is apparently established by treating God's attributes and his activities as though they are separate phenomena – a dualism that consequently needs some *pons asinorum* or construct to be bridged conceptually – it is to be doubted whether (granting the separation of God's "essence" and his "agency") there could really be any meaningful hermeneutics about man's relation to God's "essence". It will be one of the contentions of this study that it is precisely through his agency or activity that God makes his character known to humans; separated from man's interaction with and relation to God's actions, any theologising about the character or essence of God could only be speculation⁷⁴. "Biblical ontology does not separate being from doing. What *is*, acts. The God of Israel is a God who acts, a God of mighty deeds. The Bible does not say how He is, but how He acts... It is not as 'true being' that God is conceived, but as the *semper agens*"⁷⁵.

To sum up: this study will have as goal to investigate to which degree the mercy motto could play an intermediary role regarding the conceptual dualism that exists between abstract

⁷² Although it is penned in a non-scholarly context (conceptual "letters" to a "friend"), the following remark by the Christian apologist C.S. Lewis concerning expressions which for example refer to God as a "Power" could be quoted: "My dear Malcolm...You have shut us all up in despair; for the angry can forgive, and electricity can't", C.S. Lewis, *Prayer: Letters to Malcolm*, (London: Fount/Collins 1983), 126 (Letter 18).

⁷³ "...die menschliche Beziehung zu Jahwe, wie sie im Alten Testament bezeugt ist... [ist] in doppelter Weise zu betrachten, nämlich nach Handeln sowie Eigenart Jahwes, seiner φύσις oder *natura*", Wolfram Herrmann, *Jahwe der Bewahrende*, Biblisch-Theologische Studien 119 (Göttingen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2011) 37.

⁷⁴ It could be argued that God could also make his character known through revelation, but one of the hypotheses advanced in this study will be that God reveals who He is through his salvific deeds in the life of the individual or the collective, salvific deeds to which the mercy motto is a responsorial attestation.

⁷⁵ Heschel, *Prophets II* 44.

Greek conceptualising and practical Hebrew thinking about God, between God as “Hypostasis” and God as “Energeia”, between his *essere* and his *agere*. It would appear as though the mercy motto is a repository of speech about God’s acts or deeds from which certain conclusions about his being could be made. In the opinion of the author it is a one-way process: proceeding from the “ergological” as concrete, practical *datum*, one could arrive at conclusions about the “ontological” – but not *vice versa*. The mercy motto is the conceptual bridge from experiencing the practical accomplishments of God to coming to conclusions about the attributes of God.

1.6.3 Abstract thought regarding the attributes of God

In the previous section, attention was given to abstract, “theontological” concepts, originating from a Greek tradition of thought, which were employed to describe God’s “being”. Two categories were listed: aseic notions such as the “omni-types” of designations or “omni-categories”, and apophatic notions such as “invisible” and “immutable”. All these concepts convey a passive, static and non-concrete character of God. However, even when descriptions such as “compassionate”, “merciful”, “patient”, “good” and “faithful” (the epithets of the mercy motto) are used - descriptions which seem to be less static and idealising than aseic or apophatic denotations – they are often subject to a similar process of abstraction. Despite the fact that these adjectives supposedly have a semantic field denoting activity and agency, they undergo a process of conceptual sublimation, becoming intangible notions. This statement could be illustrated in the following way: a “semantic cognate” of the adjective “merciful” would be the verb “to be merciful/to show mercy.” The verb (just like the verbalised forms of the other 4 adjectives listed above) is always transitive, in other words, directed to an object. Likewise, when the epithets are reconstituted as verbal clauses, these clauses always have a transitive orientation. In short: if Israel describes God as “merciful”, the adjective signifies no less than the following: “God demonstrates his mercy to us” (a clause/sentence containing a subject, transitive verb and direct/indirect object). God’s compassion, mercy and goodness, despite the fact that they are abstract nouns, always imply an orientation towards humans, a transitive activity. One could thus say that these concepts should not be understood as abstract nouns, but as “transitive nouns/verbs”. However, this is often not the case within dogmatic categories of thought about God. Even the seemingly less static notions, like the epithets of the mercy motto, acquire a passive and static meaning. A random but representative example will be given to demonstrate this supposition.

Paul Althaus (whose works are amongst the first in an alphabetically-arranged section of Dogmatics), describes God’s love as follows: “So, God loves to love...” and “Love is not the servant of someone else in order to fulfil some sort of purposes. The purpose of love is loving

itself"⁷⁶. Leaving aside the fact that he has been discredited for certain reasons, his opinions are a demonstration of the kind of idealising or "spiritualising" thinking which pervades many attempts to formulate a doctrine of God. There is little evidence from his definition of God's love that it is invested with a transitive orientation. In terms of his definition, it does not seem as though God's love is altruistic or centrifugal, since he makes love/loving itself the object of God's love ("object" meant in both senses of the word). He creates the impression that God's love is analagous to a Möbius strip which has no "inside" or "outside" and exists in a perpetual self-returning, self-repeating and intransitive loop. In some way, what lies behind this outlook is the scholastic dualism between transcendence and immanence and the concept of God's self-sufficiency and non-involvement. However: "'Not self-sufficiency, but concern and involvement characterize his [God's] relation to the world"⁷⁷.

One more example of Althaus' way of thinking which is not unrepresentative of many dogmatics of God, is the following: according to him, mercy/compassion ("Barmherzigkeit") means that God's heart is set in motion by the suffering of humankind, that it engenders a feeling in God alive with love, and that God internalises this suffering⁷⁸ - all very beautiful thoughts, but nevertheless a description of God's compassion which employs only affective notions, and no effective notions. Althaus and other dogmaticians do not seem to take due cognisance of the active, transitive and transformative nature of God's mercy: talking about his mercy in terms of inner feelings or attitudes has the consequence that his mercy is seen as something which is not demonstrable – which opens the way for surmise and speculation. The issue will receive greater attention in the next chapter; provisionally one could state the following: God's mercy, compassion, goodness and love imply nothing less than a heartfelt feeling, but at the same time they also imply much more. They denote nothing less than an affect or attribute present in God, but additionally they also imply a deed-dimension, an effect worked by God.

The views of Althaus have received attention above. To complete the discussion, some pronouncements by theologians from a wide array of traditions and disciplines who do not always seem to give due recognition to the active and transitive dimension of the divine epithets will be mentioned. The Alsation theologian André Birmelé states that, just as with for

⁷⁶ "So liebt Gott um zu lieben...", "Die Liebe steht nicht im Dienste von irgendwelchen Zwecken des anderen, die zu verwirklichen sind. Der Zweck des Liebens ist das Lieben selbst", Paul Althaus, *Die christliche Wahrheit: Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*, Bd. 8 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn 1969) 277-278.

⁷⁷ Heschel, *Prophets* 12.

⁷⁸ "Dabei sagt der Begriff Barmherzigkeit (Ps. 103, 6; Luk. 1, 78; 6, 36; 2. Kor. 1, 3; Röm 12, 1) noch besonders, daß Gottes Herz von der Not der Menschheit bewegt wird, daß Gottes Liebe sie lebendig fühlt, sie in sich selber erleidet, sie auf sich nimmt", Althaus, *Wahrheit* 281.

example “love” or “righteousness”, “mercy” is not a quality of God, but itself the Being of God⁷⁹. He does not concretise the concept of mercy/grace, and he may also be creating the impression that there is a dualism between God’s “qualities” and his “being.” Even a great scholar of the Old Testament, Walther Eichrodt, sometimes seems to be not immune to this type of passive, non-interventive descriptions of God: he does indeed very fittingly place his discussion of God’s love under the heading “Affirmations about the Divine Activity”, but then writes the following: ““God’s love belongs to those spontaneous emotional forces which are their own justification...”⁸⁰ – much like in the case of Althaus, Eichrodt here seems to “sublimate” the love of God into an emotion which is involved in some kind of centripetal process, perpetually self-constituting and self-justifying itself. His statement needs complementing through mention of the fact that God’s love is always directed to an object, namely humankind. A last illustration: under the heading “Theology of Personhood”, Ron Highfield, discussing the doctrine of God, makes the following remark: “There is only one thing missing: formal pursuit of the issue of being (ontology)... It simply means that in the Bible there is no need or interest in explaining the meaning of God’s personhood in metaphysical terms”⁸¹ – but he promptly continues by describing God in metaphysical and apophatic terms, such as “immutability” and “impassibility”⁸². Some other pronouncements of his may create the impression of abstraction or spiritualisation: under the heading “The Gracious God of Scripture”, he describes “grace” as entailing forgiveness of sins as well as entailing a process of “transforming” and “empowering for a righteous life”⁸³. Again, these are valuable perspectives, and though the concept of grace does not exclude these perspectives, it almost invariably denotes more, namely an intervention by God in the practical, “existential” or “real-life” conditions of a human being. A more midrashic view of the grace of God is missing. There is a challenge involved in attempting to speak in non-abstract terms about God: even if the intention is to move away from a Hellenistic mode of thought, one sometimes ends up in a terminological *impasse*, having to resort to terms and concepts which betray this Greek heritage.

This subsection, dealing with the ways of speaking about perceived non-metaphysical qualities of God, such as those worded in the mercy motto, could now be summarized. There is often a tendency in disciplines of theology to idealise or spiritualise the characteristics of God, not only through the usage of aseic or apophatic terms, but also by rendering divine

⁷⁹ “Tout comme l’amour, la parole ou la justice, la grâce n’est pas une qualité de Dieu mais l’être même de Dieu”, André Birmelé, *L’Horizon de la grâce: La foi chrétienne* (Paris: Cerf 2013) 205.

⁸⁰ Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (London: SCM Press 1969) 228.

⁸¹ Highfield, *Great is the Lord* 245ff.

⁸² Op.cit. 358f., 375f.

⁸³ Op.cit. 193, 194.

epithets like mercy and compassion into a mere feeling or passive attitude present in God. This process is initiated when theological utterances about God are such that they convey the notion of a vague ontological entity or hypostasis. As a consequence, his attributes (which find expression in activities) are also etiolated. Co-opting the mercy motto in a doctrine of God could lead to an illumination of the so-called “attributes” and “qualities” of God by grounding them in the “divine deed dimension” suggested by the mercy motto.

1.7 The reception of the grace formula as theological category

The purpose of this orienting chapter was firstly to point out that the concepts of God’s mercy, compassion and grace have not received due recognition as theological category within theologies of the Old and New Testaments. Secondly, narrowing the focus, an essay was made to convince the reader that the grace formula, as a specific and concentrated wording of God’s mercy, has likewise not been sufficiently acknowledged within disciplines and subdisciplines of theology.

The next stage of the discussion was an effort to explain the inadequate reception of the concept of divine compassion, whether in general or in the guise of the grace formula. Firstly, the tendency to use static and abstract nouns to formulate central themes in the Old Testament was tendered as possible reason. Secondly, the inclination to use ontological, impersonal terms when outlining a doctrine of God within Old as well as New Testament theology was highlighted. Thirdly, it was pointed out that an impersonal terminology was often a result of “theontological” thinking which could lead to idealising or spiritualising the notions of divine mercy and compassion, voiding them of their practical and transitive orientation.

Against this background, the imperative to take cognisance of the mercy motto becomes evident. In the first place (and again referring to theologies of the Old and New Testament) it has the potentiality to indicate a possible centre of a Biblical theology, or at the very least to indicate a central theme within Old/New Testament and Systematic theologies. Scholars like Gerhard von Rad, H.H. Schmid and Claus Westermann voiced reservations about nominal speech categories and stated their preference for a dynamic and verbal language when formulating central Biblical themes. Given the verbally conceived character of the mercy motto (an aspect that will be explored further in the next chapter), it has the ability to express any central theme of the Bible in a more appropriate way than when using abstract, nominally conceived terminology. In this regard, the evaluation by Markus Witte in an article about the concept of God’s mercy and its placement within the mercy motto is very apt: “The distribution of the Old Testament instances of the grace formula and its derivatives, its density of speech

and its compositional placing have therefore rightly given rise to an appreciation that speech about God's mercy and wrath be placed in the centre of the Old Testament"⁸⁴.

In the second place, the mercy motto could also serve as a hermeneutical corrective within the cadres of a doctrine of God. It offers a way to bypass Heschel's "ontocentric predicament": we have seen that theologians like Heschel, Davies, and Highfield are of the opinion that the focus of a doctrine of God should not be the aseic or apophatic divine "entity", but rather the divine activity or "Wirksamkeit", thus shifting the attention from "being" to "doing." Heschel therefore says the following: "He [God] is not a thing, but a happening"⁸⁵. The potentiality of the mercy motto to bypass the ontocentric problematic, to bridge the conceptual dualism between God's "essence" and his "agence", between his attributes to his activities, could be described as follows: the divine epithets encapsulated in the mercy motto have an "ergological", not an "ontological" register. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, it facilitates a type of thinking about God which gives priority to his acts, not his attitudes: it is by experiencing his deeds that conclusions about his disposition can be made. At the same time, this view establishes a unity and continuity between the two dimensions: thanks to the ergological register of the mercy motto, meaningful conclusions about the "ontological" qualities of God can be made.

With the last comments, the third aspect which illuminates the potentiality of the mercy motto has already been touched upon: the context or matrix of the mercy motto is always God's "wonderful works" or "mighty marvels"⁸⁶. It is when this matrix is not recognized that concepts such as mercy and compassion are subject to a process of etiolation or sublimation, as they are not grounded in the interventive accomplishments of God. The context within which the mercy motto is placed always invests the divine epithets contained in the formula with the notion of a "divine deed dimension". This notion furthermore acts as guide in the choice of speech about God, so that there are also some linguistic matters that have to be considered:

⁸⁴ "Die Streuung der alttestamentlichen Belege für die Gnadenformel und ihrer Derivate, deren sprachliche Dichte und kompositionelle Position haben daher zu Recht zu der Einschätzung geführt, die Rede von der Barmherzigkeit und dem Zorn Gottes in das Zentrum einer Theologie des Alten Testaments zu stellen", Markus Witte, "'Barmherzigkeit und Zorn Gottes' im Alten Testament am Beispiel des Buchs Jesus Sirach", *Divine Wrath and Divine Mercy in the World of Antiquity*, FAT 33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008) 181. His comment should be read with one qualification: many scholars do not view the *addendum* in Ex. 34:7 about God's wrath as part of the mercy motto. Hermann Spieckermann, for example, speaks of a "dyssimmetry" or "asymmetry" between the concepts of mercy and wrath, H. Spieckermann, "Wrath and Mercy as Crucial Terms of Theological Hermeneutics" *Divine Wrath and Divine Mercy in the World of Antiquity*, FAT 33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008) 10.

⁸⁵ Heschel, *Prophets II* 44, 57.

⁸⁶ At first glance, it may appear as if the mercy motto in Ex. 34:6 does not have the divine deeds as matrix, since it is an utterance regarding divine Self-Revelation. However, in chapter 2 it will become apparent that even here, references to the divine activity are implicitly present.

there is a growing consensus within theological circles that any speech about God should take the rhetoric of the Bible as point of departure. Brueggemann is a representative of this view; his statement that theologies of the Old Testament are too “cognitive and idealizing” has already been quoted above⁸⁷. The mercy motto seems to be a very fitting example of Biblical rhetoric about the character and accomplishments of God, something which will be duly investigated in the following chapters.

⁸⁷ Subsection 1.6.1.

Chapter 2:

The grace formula in the Old Testament

2.1 Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, the aim of this thesis is to investigate the degree of reception that the so-called “grace formula” enjoyed within the Old and New Testaments, and to assess its potentiality to serve as hermeneutical key to theologies of the Old Testament and New Testament. Thus far, an attempt was made to demonstrate that the reception in Old and New Testament theologies of the general concepts of mercy and grace, as well as the reception of the specific concentration of these concepts in the grace motto, has not been adequate. Possible reasons for this inadequate appraisal of the grace formula were mooted, for example the tendency to abstract, “Athenian” thinking which has characterised Western theology in general as well as dogmatic thinking about God in particular. This abstract, conceptualising mode of thinking, typical of Hellenistic thought categories, stands in contrast to the Jewish and midrashic way of thinking which does not conceive of Biblical theology, or of a dogmatics of God, in abstract, idealising terms. Additionally, an effort was made to show that, even in cases where account was taken of the concepts of God’s mercy, grace and lovingkindness (which are not aseic or apophatic terms), these were often accorded a non-concrete, “passive” meaning and content, thus depriving them of their transitive orientation towards mankind. In conclusion, references were made to certain developments in theological thought which merit a re-assessment of the hermeneutical potential of the grace formula. These developments are firstly the continued search for a “Mitte” or “centre” of the Old Testament and of the Old and New Testament as a whole, secondly the ever-recurring dogmatical reflection about God, and thirdly certain developments in linguistics, all three developments which make the grace formula a relevant theme in present-day theological reflections.

With the abovementioned *précis* as referential background, aspects of the grace formula in the Old Testament will now be taken under consideration.

2.1 The grace formula in the Old Testament

It was pointed out in chapter 1 that the grace formula appears seven times in the Old Testament, with only slight variations which will be pointed out in the discussion. Additionally, there are at least eight occurrences of the mercy motto in shortened form⁸⁸. It appears in full form in all three *corpora* of the Old Testament: the *Torah*/Law (Exodus 34:6), the *kēṭûbîm*/Writings (Nehemiah 9:17, Psalms 86:15, 103:8 and 145:8) and the *nēbî’îm*/Prophets

⁸⁸ According to the present author’s count; see chapter 1, subsection 1.3, page 8.

(Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2)⁸⁹. There is not consensus about the original Sitz im Leben of the formula, although it almost certainly had a setting within the cultic practices of prayer and/or praise in Israel⁹⁰. There is also some difference of opinion about the dating, although a fairly broad consensus exists that the formula is exilic or post-exilic⁹¹. At this point it may be fitting to make a certain distinction: there is a difference between the usage of the formula as spoken words within a collective or individual cultic act, and the usage of the formula as written word within a canonical scriptural text and context. There is a great probability that the formula was first employed as *verba dicta*, and that it eventually found incorporation within the *Tanakh* as *verba scripta*, which means that the spoken formula within the religious rite had chronological priority. Between the inception of the formula within the living cult and the reception of the formula within the Scriptures lies a long process which would be the focus of a *Traditions-, Form- or Redaktionsgeschichte*. However, the present research is concerned with the written formula(s) within canonical text; it works with a synchronic lens, not a diachronic one. It is only to the extent that diachronical perspectives may inform the synchronic approach that they will be deemed relevant⁹². In terms of the *textual* setting of the seven instances of the grace motto, the following could be said: in Exodus 34:7, it forms part of the divine Self-revealing events which are described, and in Nehemiah 9:17 it is woven into a narrative recital of praise but also confession (in both senses of the word: attesting to God's goodness, and confessing Israel's repeated disobedience). In Psalm 86:15 it is used as a formula of supplication and in Psalms 103:8 and 145:8 it is embedded in a song of praise. In Joel 2:13, it is part of an admonition to return to God against the prophetic background of the coming of the Day of the Lord with its universalist implications. In Jonah 4:2, it is used in a parodic way, assuming a

⁸⁹ There are other formulaic wordings in the Old Testament, like the following: "Praise the Lord, for He is good; his loyal love lasts forever!" (43 instances, of which 26 in Ps.136); "[Lord] have mercy [on me/us]" (19 times, e.g. Pss. 6:2, 9:13) and "Deliver me" (14 times, e.g. Pss. 16:1, 22:20). The word-pair "lovingkindness/goodness and faithfulness"/"love and loyalty"/"constant love" (*hesed w^eemet*) appears 30 times, of which 14 are in the Psalms. In two cases, it forms the last word-pair of the mercy motto (Ex.34:6 and Ps.86:15).

The reason why the appearance of the grace formula in all three bodies of the OT is mentioned, is simply to point out its wide-spread distribution (cf. Witte's statement about the "Streuung...der Belege"; see fn. 84). If the grace formula were concentrated in a single *corpus* or a single book, its significance, applicability and relevance for the OT as a whole would be reduced to a greater or lesser degree.

⁹⁰ Cf. Hermann Spieckermann, "Barmherzig und gnädig ist der Herr...", ZAW 102 (1990) 1-18. There is a minority opinion that the original Sitz im Leben of the motto was the Wisdom Literature; see Robert Claude Dentan, "The literary affinities of Exodus xxxiv 6f.", Vetus Testamentum (VT) 13 (Leiden: Brill, 1963) 34-51.

⁹¹ Horace Simian-Yofre, "*rah^amîm*..." 449, states that the books of Joel, Jonah and Nehemiah are "clearly post-exilic", and points out that Pss. 86, 103 and 145 "belong to the latest stratum of the Psalter, as their numerous borrowings from earlier psalms show"; he also includes other citations which contain the mercy motto in partial guise, such as 2 Chr. 30:9 and Pss. 78:38, 111:4 and 112:4. The last-mentioned citation is not entirely apt, as it does not refer to God, but to the person who fears/serves God. Joseph Scharbert even distinguishes within intra-textual settings: he allocates Ex.34:6 to an early Yahwist (J) editor, and verse 7 to a later, Elohist (E) editor; J. Scharbert, "Formgeschichte und Exegese von Ex 34,6 und seiner Parallelen", Biblica 38:2 (1957) 131, 135.

⁹² Also see short comment in chapter 1, section 1.3, p.8, fn. 39.

guise of reproaching God for the universalist orientation of his benevolence and beneficence, but in this parodic way advocating the inclusivist tendency of his mercy and goodness.

For the sake of a synopsis, all seven appearances of the mercy motto as they are translated in the Revised English Bible (REB)⁹³, are listed below.

Table 2.1: The seven instances of the mercy motto

Ex. 34:6	The LORD, the LORD, a God compassionate and gracious, long-suffering, ever faithful and true.
Neh. 9:17	But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, long-suffering and ever constant.
Ps. 86:15	But you, Lord, are God, compassionate and gracious, long-suffering, ever faithful and true.
Ps. 103:8	The LORD is compassionate and gracious, long-suffering and ever faithful.
Ps. 145:8	The LORD is gracious and compassionate, long-suffering and ever faithful.
Joel 2:13	He he is gracious and compassionate, long-suffering and ever constant.
Jon. 4:2	You are a gracious and compassionate God, long-suffering, ever constant.

Some initial observations are to be made: firstly, in the various translations of the original Hebrew terms (to be discussed below), there is no consistent use of the same terms in translation. The Hebrew term *rahûm*, rendered as “compassionate” in the REB, is translated as “merciful” in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and New American Bible (NAB), and as “tenderness” in the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB). Whereas the REB uses the term “compassionate” as equivalent of *rahûm*, the New Jerusalem Bible employs the term “compassion” for *hannûn*, thereby switching the terminology. There is not even consistency within the same body of translation: for example, the REB renders the Hebrew phrase *rah-hesed* in two different guises, “ever faithful” (four times), and “ever constant” (three times)⁹⁴. This phrase, which concludes the grace formula, seems especially problematic judged by the variety of translated terms which it has engendered, as well as by the seemingly inconsistent usage of equivalent terms in translation⁹⁵. The following table demonstrates the variety and diversity of translations of this phrase.

⁹³ *The Complete Parallel Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Revised English Bible, New American Bible, New Jerusalem Bible* (New York/Oxford: OUP, 1993).

⁹⁴ The possible explanation that synonyms are used for the sake of variation does not cover the fact that a single term is used throughout in the Hebrew.

⁹⁵ Using *hesed* as example, Alfred Jepsen remarks that various meanings and associations (“Begriffsgefüge”) are generated by such concepts, making translation difficult and even virtually impossible with the use of only a single word; Jepsen, “Gnade und Barmherzigkeit im Alten Testament”, *Kerygma und Dogma* 7:4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961) 261.

Table 2.2: The seven incidences of the final unit of the grace formula in four English translations⁹⁶

<i>rb-ḥsd</i>	NRSV	REB	NAB	NJ
Exodus 34:6 [<i>w^e’emet</i> added]	Abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness	Ever faithful and true	Rich in kindness and fidelity	Rich in faithful love and constancy
Nehemiah 9:17	Abounding in steadfast love	Ever constant	Rich in mercy	Rich in faithful love
Psalms 86:15 [<i>w^e’emet</i> added]	Abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness	Ever faithful and true	Most loving and true	Rich in faithful love and loyalty
Psalms 103:8	Abounding in steadfast love	Ever faithful	Abounding in kindness	Rich in faithful love
Psalms 145:8	Abounding in steadfast love	Ever faithful	Abounding in <i>love</i>	Full ⁹⁷ of faithful love
Joel 2:13	Abounding in steadfast love	Ever constant	Rich in kindness	Rich in faithful love
Jonah 4:2	Abounding in steadfast love	Ever constant	Rich in clemency	Rich in faithful love

Some conclusions may be drawn from the above. Firstly, the explanation for the divergent and seemingly inconsistent translation of the Hebrew terms could hardly be that translators endeavoured to take into account a gradual change in meaning of the terms as seen in a diachronic perspective, although some terms may have indeed undergone a gradual shift in scope⁹⁸. In addition: even if the assumption were made that the grace formula had a long tradition history, making it susceptible to gradual changes in meaning, the fact that it had solidified into a formula should rather render it relatively impervious to significant shifts in its semantic field of reference. Secondly, given the degree of variation in the translated terms in the REB, but more especially the NAB, it is not untenable to draw the inference that the lack of coordination regarding the translation of the grace formula or its respective constituent phrases might be due to different translators’ having been allocated different Old Testament books to translate, or, in the case of a single translator, not having referenced her/his first version of the original Hebrew formula when encountering the formula in later instances. Additionally, doubts could be proffered whether the grace motto was even recognised as such in the New American Bible, since, given its formulaic literary character, it requires a formula-like, and therefore consistent, translation, which is not the case in the NAB, in contrast to the

⁹⁶ Taken from *The Complete Parallel Bible*.

⁹⁷ Psalm 145:8 is the only place where *vgdl* (“great/big”) is used instead of *vrb* (“rich”, “abounding”). “Full” is thus a felicitous translation, distinguishing the phrases *g^edāl-ḥesed* (גִּדְל־חֶסֶד) and *rab-ḥesed* (רַב־חֶסֶד).

⁹⁸ The meaning of *ḥesed*, for example, has undergone some change from a particularistic to a universalistic view of God’s lovingkindness; see for example Wolfram Herrmann, *Jahwe der Bewahrende*, BTS 119 (Göttingen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2011) 127, and José Luis Barriocanal, “La tensión latente en la revelación del ser de Dios: Ex 34,6-7 y su relectura en el libro de los Doce”, *Scripta Theologica*, vol. 48:2 (Pamplona: SPUN, 2016) 381-403.

NRSV, the REB to a degree, and the NJB. In this respect, it is worth noting some non-English translations of the original Hebrew texts, starting with the Septuagint, that do preserve this formulary character. A composite of Italian translations in which the formula is not rendered consistently is added as a contrasting comparison.

Table 2.3: The grace formula in 6 non-English translations, with original Hebrew text⁹⁹

	Exodus 34:6, Psalm 86:15	Neh. 9:17, Ps. 103:8, Ps. 145:8, Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2
Hebrew	וַיִּמְחַן יְרֵב־אֲפִים אֶרְךָ וְחַנּוּן רַחוּם <i>rahûm w^e hannûn 'erek 'appayim w^erab-ḥesed w^eemet</i>	וַיִּמְחַן יְרֵב־אֲפִים אֶרְךָ וְחַנּוּן רַחוּם <i>rahûm w^e hannûn 'erek 'appayim w^erab-ḥesed</i> (Ps. 145: <i>g^edâl-ḥesed</i>)
Greek	οἰκτίρμων καὶ ἐλεήμων, μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος καὶ ἀληθινός	οἰκτίρμων καὶ ἐλεήμων, μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος
Afrikaans	Barmhartig en genadig, lankmoedig, vol liefde en trou	Barmhartig en genadig, lankmoedig en vol liefde
Dutch	Barmhartig en genadig, lankmoedig, groot van goedertierenheid, en trouw	Barmhartig en genadig, lankmoedig, groot van goedertierenheid
French	Miséricordieux et bienveillant, lent à la colère, plein de fidélité et de loyauté	Miséricordieux et bienveillant, lent à la colère, plein de fidélité
German	Barmherziger und gnädiger Gott, langmütig, reich an Huld und Treue	Barmherzig und gnädig, langmütig, reich an Huld
Italian	Misericordioso e pietoso (Ex. 34) /Pietoso e clemente (Ps. 86), lento all'ira, ricco di grazia e di fedeltà (Ex. 34)/grande in bontà e in verità (Ps. 86)	Pietoso [misericordioso, buono, paziente] e clemente [pieno de compassione, pietoso, benigno], lento/tardo all'ira [longanime], di grande benevolenza [di grande benignità, di gran bontà, grande nell'amore, ricco/pieno di bontà/benevolenza]

To conclude the line of reasoning started above: another possibility for divergences may be that translators strived for variety, consciously endeavouring to avoid repetitions of the same terms, but against this supposition it could be countered that, apart from not acknowledging

⁹⁹ *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Rudolf Kittel, ed. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937/61); *Septuaginta*, vol. I, II, Alfred Rahlfs ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935/82); *Die Bybel: Nuwe Vertaling* (Kaapstad: BGSA, 1984); *Het Oude Testament in zes Nederlandse Vertalingen* ('S-Gravenhage: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 1979); *Ancien Testament: Édition intégrale* (Paris: Cerf, 1975); *Das Alte Testament: Einheitsübersetzung der Heiligen Schrift* (Stuttgart: Katholische Bibelanstalt, 1980); *La Bibbia dei Settanta*, Marco Bertagna/Corrado Martone ed. (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2012/13)(containing an Italian translation).

the formulaic nature of this text, there is no consistency in the variety; the variety appears rather too varied, especially in the case of the Italian.

The purpose of the above overview was to give an indication of some of the challenges involved when working with the grace formula. Firstly, the plenitude of different terms or synonyms employed in translation is evidence that there could hardly ever be a complete semantic congruence between the Hebrew terms and their translated equivalents. Secondly, it is a prerequisite that the grace formula should *ab initio* be recognised as such whenever and wherever it appears in full or in part in the Old Testament, in order to ensure that any translational, exegetical or hermeneutical activity exhibits cross-referencing, coordination and consistency when approaching the formula and its constituent terms. The fact that the formula seems not always to have been recognised as such during the process of translation could be tendered as support for the contention of this thesis, namely that there has not been an adequate recognition of the formula within in the sphere of theology, be it exegesis, hermeneutics, dogmatics or, in this case, translation.

With these observations serving as introduction, a discussion of the constituent terms of the grace formula¹⁰⁰ will now be given.

2.2 The constituent terms of the grace formula

2.2.1 **רחום *raḥûm* (Septuagint οἰκτίρμων, Afrikaans and Dutch “barmhartig”, English “merciful”/“compassionate”, French “miséricordieux”, German “barmherzig”¹⁰¹, Italian “misericordioso”/“pietoso”)**

The oldest extant documentary evidence for the use of “merciful” as a divine epithet in a Northwest Semitic language - apart from the fairly general usage of the Mesopotamian formula *ilu rēmēnû* - appears on the Tell Fekheriye stele from the ninth century B.C., inscribed in Akkadian (an Assyrian dialect) and Aramaic. The Aramaic reads *ʾlh rḥmn*, “merciful god”, and is a close equivalent to the Hebrew *raḥûm*¹⁰². However, the relation and affinity between the respective biblical and extra-biblical terms, as well as their respective reception history, is

¹⁰⁰ As noted in ch. 1, section 1.1, this is the term coined by Hermann Spieckermann (“Gnadenformel”) in an article titled “Barmherzig und gnädig ist der Herr...,” ZAW 102 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990) 1, and used by authors such as Christoph Dohmen and Mathias Franz. Many other terms are also employed by scholars, such as “Credo formula”, “Confession of faith”, “Epiklese”, “Epiphanieformel”, “Exodus formula”, “Motif of mercy” etc. In this study, the terms “grace formula” and “mercy motto” and their permutations (e.g. “grace motto”) will be used.

¹⁰¹ Martin Buber, in his German translation, uses the term “gönnend” (“[graciously] granting, bestowing”). See *Die Schrift*, transl. Martin Buber & Franz Rosenzweig (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1976).

¹⁰² Mathias Franz, *Der barmherzige und gnädige Gott: Die Gnadenrede vom Sinai (Exodus 34, 6-7) und ihre Parallelen im Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt* [Monograph], BWANT 160 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003) 83-84.

beyond the *scopus* of this thesis, in which the mercy formula as it stands within a canonic context is investigated.

In the Hebrew Old Testament, the adjective of \sqrt{rhm} appears 134 times and the verb 46 times¹⁰³. The nominal inflections of \sqrt{rhm} in the singular could denote the womb/uterus; figuratively it could denote the birthplace of the new day (Psalm 110:3b) or of the sea (Job 38:8)¹⁰⁴. The plural noun denotes “bowels”/“innermost body” and in its verbal form has the figurative connotation “to be deeply moved emotionally”, or, to use the descriptions of Rocchetta & Manes, to experience a “deep maternal/paternal emotion” or “stirrings of loving tenderness”¹⁰⁵. Besides the phrase “to be deeply moved”, another English equivalent would be “to feel one’s heart stirred”, as in Jeremiah 31:20b¹⁰⁶; the Afrikaans and Dutch equivalent would be “diepe ontroering”. It is striking that the adjective as well as participle of \sqrt{rhm} are used exclusively for JHWH, with the single exception being Psalm 112:4 where it is used as description of the righteous¹⁰⁷. At the very least, \sqrt{rhm} denotes the compassionate response by a person confronted with somebody who is literally poor, that is, in dire material need, such as a beggar. This view is supported by the fact that the root of the word for “poor”/“impoverished” (Latin “miser”) is still to be found in the Latin for “compassion”, namely *misericordia*¹⁰⁸, as well as in the daughter languages of Latin, like French, Italian and Spanish¹⁰⁹. Even in the Germanic linguistic family, the equivalent terms for \sqrt{rhm} , for example the Afrikaans and Dutch “barmhartigheid” and “ontferming”, and the German “Barmherzigkeit/Erbarmen”, have as their root the signifier “arm” (“poor”)¹¹⁰. It is almost self-evident that this term was always susceptible of a figurative interpretation which, apart from application to a person in material need, could also be applied to any person who experienced

¹⁰³ Franz, op.cit. 116.

¹⁰⁴ Carlo Rocchetta & Rosalba Manes, *La tenerezza grembo di Dio amore* (Bologna: EDB, 2015) 32.

¹⁰⁵ A “commozione materna/paterna” or “fremiti di tenerezza”, Rocchetta & Manes, op.cit. 32.

¹⁰⁶ רַחוּם אֶרְחָמֶנּוּ, a phraseology which will surface again when the concept of *πλαγχνίζομαι* is discussed in chapter 4.

¹⁰⁷ Franz, op.cit. 118.

¹⁰⁸ From “miser” (“poor”) plus “cor” (“heart”); *misericordia* thus means “to feel emotions in your heart for a poor person”.

¹⁰⁹ Italian, and Spanish *misericordia*, Portuguese *misericórdia*; the Romanian *milă* is a loanword from the Russian.

¹¹⁰ In Gothic, we find the term *arma-hæta*, “poor-heart” which is the direct equivalent of *misericordia*. J.A. Jungmann mentions the presence of converted Vandals (a Germanic tribe) in North Africa circa 500 A.D. who did not pray Κύριε ἐλέησον (“Lord, have mercy”) in the vernacular Greek, but *Frôja armês* in their own language; see *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development* (Dublin: Four Courts 1986) 335, footnote 11. Over time, the root *arm* acquired an initial bilabial or labio-dental consonant (“b” or “f”), resulting in “barm-”, and also in “ferm-”, as in Afrikaans and Dutch *ontferming*. Compare a similar process in Afrikaans/Dutch/German: “bang” (“afraid”) was formed from adding the bilabial plosive “b” to “eng/ang” (“narrow”). Another example is the variant “orm-worm”: *orm* is the old North Germanic for “worm” (meaning “dragon/snake”; Afrikaans “wurm”, Dutch “worm/wurm”). Over time it acquired the preceding bilabial fricative “w”.

non-material want or emotional and spiritual loss, just as to this day the sympathetic exclamation when hearing about somebody's misfortune is "The *poor* person"¹¹¹.

As will be reiterated during the course of the discussion, the meaning of \sqrt{rhm} , and likewise the meaning of the other terms of the grace motto, should not be confined to a mere feeling or state of mind that is present in God. It is not only a term which designates a passive *affect* present in God, but the context reveals that it is also an *effect* actuated by God. The divine mercy always finds fulfilment in a manifest deed, work, or "marvel" of God. Stated in another way: the adjective "merciful" and its cognates denote nothing less than a feeling present in God, but at the same it denotes much more, namely an achievement by God. It always has a transitive orientation, directing itself towards those who are in need or who suffer. André Birmelé rightly points out that "grâce" (\sqrt{rhm}), has a "destinataire" or receiver¹¹². This receiver becomes the object of the divine transitive activity. Therefore, the adjective "merciful" and the abstract noun "mercy" should be understood as having a verbal field of reference. Mathias Franz coined a very apt term in this regard, namely "Wirknomina". With this term he has in mind abstract nouns like "grace" (*ḥēn*), "lovingkindness" (*ḥesed*) and "righteousness" (*ts^edâqâh*) which nevertheless denote a practical activity of God: "They indicate ways in which God *acts on*, or goes about with, a human or the world. Formally, they are to be designated as *nouns*...in terms of contents they should be understood as an event between God and human or world"¹¹³.

The "deed dimension" of the divine mercy is acknowledged by many authors. Horst Dietrich Preuss states that "*Merciful*...designates loving care in terms of a concrete act, not only an attitude"¹¹⁴. Carlo Rocchetta describes *rhm* as implying "a compassionate turning towards somebody who is in need, enlivened by lovingness and transmuted into *taking care* of the other..."¹¹⁵. Franz makes the statement "Mercy thus consists of a saving deed"¹¹⁶. Walther Brueggemann also acknowledges that the biblical concept of mercy finds manifestation in

¹¹¹ The reader will also be aware of the English terms "misery", "miserable" and "commiseration" in which the Latin term is preserved.

¹¹² André Birmelé, *L'Horizon de la grâce: La foi chrétienne* (Paris: Cerf, 2013) 209.

¹¹³ "Sie bezeichnen Weisen, auf die Gott an den Menschen und an der Welt *wirkt* oder handelt. Formal sind sie bestimmbar als *Nomina*...Inhaltlich sind sie verstehbar als Geschehen zwischen Gott und Mensch oder Welt", Franz, *Der barmherzige Gott* 19 [italics in the original].

¹¹⁴ "*Barmherzig*...bezeichnet Fürsorge, konkretes Tun, nicht nur Gesinnung", Horst Dietrich Preuß, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Band 1 (Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln, 1991) 236 [italics in the original]. The version of the concluding German phrase given on page 242 of the English translation of his work, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), is not accurate. It omits to translate "nur" ("only"), and also adds "but" which is not even implicit in the original: "but only an attitude" instead of "not only an attitude".

¹¹⁵ "...un *moto compassionevole* rivolto a chi è in bisogno, vissuto con amorevolezza e tradotto con *un prendersi cura* dell'altro...", Rocchetta & Manes, *Tenerezza* 30 [italics in the original].

¹¹⁶ "Barmherzigkeit besteht also in der Tat der Rettung...", Franz, *Der barmherzige Gott* 117.

“times and events in which Yahweh is seen to be concretely merciful”¹¹⁷. Mercy or compassion is an act that always springs from the innermost being of God¹¹⁸.

In summary: Jepsen calls \sqrt{rhm} one of the words which are especially suitable to illustrate the work of God¹¹⁹. With regard to them who are suffering and in need, God experiences a stirring in the depths of his being, and is consequently moved by compassion to actively intervene in the situation of the suffering, and to bring about a concrete change in the circumstances. The process originates in an affection but terminates in an accomplishment. Scripture often bears witness to this process of merciful divine intervention: “To you, LORD, I called, and pleaded with you for mercy: ...You have turned my laments into dancing; you have stripped off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy” (Psalm 30:8,11; REB).

2.2.2 מִנַּח *hannûn* (ἐλεήμων, “*genadig*”, “*gracious*”, “*bienveillant*”/“*gracieux*”, “*gnädig*”, “*misericordioso*”/“*pietoso*”)

\sqrt{hnn} and its cognates are found at least 236 times in the Old Testament, of which the verbal forms of \sqrt{hnn} (“to show grace/favour”) appear 78 times and the noun *hen* (“grace/favour”) 69 times¹²⁰. Rocchetta observes that, out of the 78 instances of the verb, 30 are found in the Psalms¹²¹. The adjectival forms, as well as a majority of the verbal forms of \sqrt{hnn} , are used exclusively for God¹²². Regardless of whether God or a human being is the subject of the verb or adjective of \sqrt{hnn} , the term usually implies an unequal relationship between the giver who enjoys a superior or advantageous situation, and the receiver, who occupies a status inferior to that of the giver¹²³. Being favourably disposed towards a person who is in an indigent situation and granting them their petition is typified as “being gracious”. “The term is used most often to suggest that Yahweh acts gratuitously, without need for compensation or hope of benefit, but freely and generously”¹²⁴. It should again be emphasised that, as in the case of the other elements of the grace formula, the concept of \sqrt{hnn} has a “deed dimension”. This dimension is not always adequately addressed when the elements are discussed. Walther Eichrodt declares that \sqrt{hnn} “indicates the affection shown by a superior to his inferiors,

¹¹⁷ Walther Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997) 209.

¹¹⁸ “In jedem Fall ein Handeln, das aus Gottes innerstem Wesen entspringt”, Jepsen, “Gnade” 264.

¹¹⁹ “...jedenfalls gehört die Wurzel zu den Worten, die in besonderer Weise das Handeln Gottes anschaulich zu machen geeignet scheinen”, Jepsen, art.cit. 263.

¹²⁰ Franz, *Der barmherzige Gott* 119. Other forms mentioned by Franz are the nouns (here given in his transliterations) *hnh* (“grace”), *thnh* and *thwnim* (“plea”) and the adjectives/adverbs *hnm* (“gratuitously”, “favourably”) and *hnn* (“graciously”).

¹²¹ Rocchetta & Manes, op.cit. 34.

¹²² Franz, op.cit. 120. He also points out that the use of the nominal form is ambivalent (God or man being the subject).

¹²³ Franz, op.cit. 80; Rocchetta & Manes, *Tenerezza* 34.

¹²⁴ Brueggemann, op.cit. 209.

especially of the rich man for the poor". It seems as though he reduces or limits the notion of grace to a mere *sentiment*, omitting, as it were, to "earth" it in a concrete *event*. Franz states that \sqrt{hnn} denotes the "kind answer" for which the petitionary party is hoping, but he does not explicate what such a benign answer may consist of, what it *actually* denotes. As was stated above with regard to \sqrt{rhm} , all the forms of \sqrt{hnn} , whether nominal, verbal or adjectival/adverbial, should likewise be interpreted *au* Franz as *Wirknomina/-adjectiva/-adverbia*, as having a transitive verbal impetus. Thus "grace", "showing favour", "graciously" all indicate a divine initiative which proceeds from a disposition of graciousness and goodwill, and culminates in a real, manifest change in the circumstances of the party who is in need or distress. Psalm 10:14 may be taken as a succinct statement of the meaning of divine grace in relation to those who are suffering deprivation: "But you see the trouble and the distress, and you will do something. The poor can count on you, and so can orphans"¹²⁵. "When I was hard pressed, you set me free; be gracious to me and hear my prayer" (Psalm 4:1b, REB).

A few final observations could be made, with a remark by Ron Highfield serving as point of departure: "Whereas in grace God gives himself to the undeserving, in mercy God gives himself to the suffering"¹²⁶. Though it sounds attractive, this view seems to divide grace and mercy into two separate streams, each with its own, exclusive recipients. The counterview could be postulated that there is surely no reason why the undeserving could not also be the beneficiaries of God's mercy, or the suffering receivers of God's grace. The conclusion should rather be made that the two terms "mercy" and "grace" are to be understood as conveying a single concept. To a great extent, their respective semantic fields are overlapping¹²⁷. They form a word-pair conveying an encompassing notion, a *hendiadys*. This observation is further supported on two accounts. Firstly, these two concepts are each mentioned twice in the immediate preceding context, namely Exodus 33:19 "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" – this *parallelismus membrorum* is now recapitulated in shorthand as a *hendiadys* ten verses later in Exodus 34:6. Secondly, the divine attributes of mercy and grace both find their complement and consummation in a saving event that is accomplished in the life of the individual or the collective; both concepts have the same outcome and should therefore be conceptualized as a single, though multifaceted, semantic unit.

¹²⁵ Contemporary English Version (CEV), BibleGateway, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=+Psalm+10%3A14&version=CEV> [15.08.2018].

¹²⁶ Highfield, Ron, *Great is the Lord: Theology for the Praise of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) 201.

¹²⁷ "The adjective [of \sqrt{hnn}] is regularly parallel to *rahum*...", William Frederick Lofthouse, "Ḥen and Ḥesed in the Old Testament", ZAW 51 (1933) 30.

2.2.3 אֶרֶק אִפִּים אֶרֶק *'erek 'appayîm* (μακρόθυμος, “*lankmoedig*”/“*geduldig*”, “*long-suffering*”/“*slow to anger*”, “*lent à la colère*”, “*langmütig*”, “*lento all’ira*”/“*longanime*”)

It is surprising what short shrift the epithet “slow to anger” is given in theologies of, as well as commentaries on, the Old Testament. The most extended discussion which could be found is by Franz, who accords the term less than three pages¹²⁸. The lexicographers that were consulted either have no entry for this concept at all¹²⁹, concentrate on patience as a human virtue, or discuss patience with regard to the New Testament, with only cursory reference of the Old Testament¹³⁰.

Whereas mercy and grace are in the main perceived as divine characteristics, patience or showing forbearance is in the Old Testament equally ascribed to God as well as to wise human beings. The wisdom literature shows a preference for the concept of patience as a human feature, which is sometimes contrasted with impatience or quick-temper (קָצַר-אַפִּים *q̣eṣsar-’appayîm*, Proverbs 14:17; קָצַר-רוּחַ *q̣eṣsar-rûaḥ*, Proverbs 14:29), whereas the notion of forbearance as a divine attribute is favoured in the prophetic literature¹³¹. It is important to bear in mind that the divine patience consists of *refraining from* doing something (punishing, chastising), and thus could be understood as finding its consummation in a “non-event”. This notion finds expression in the story of Jonah, in which God desists from executing judgment over Nineveh, thus demonstrating his patience. There is another intertextual connection between the events in Jonah and the events preceding the utterance of the mercy motto in Exodus 34: after the Golden Calf episode and Moses’ destruction of the Two Tablets, God declares that he is angry with Israel and is going to utterly destroy them (וְאַכְלֶם בָּקָם וְיִחַר-אַפִּי, Exodus 32:10, also cf. verse 12). Moses intercedes for Israel (just as Jonah was supposed to intercede for Nineveh), upon which the Lord “repented of the evil/harm [that He wanted to do to them]” (עַל-הָרָעָה יִהְיֶה וַיִּנָּחֵם, Exodus 32:14). This is the same wording that we find in Jonah 3:10 (עַל-הָרָעָה הָאֵלֵהִים וַיִּנָּחֵם) when God repents of the harm that He intends to do to Nineveh. It is God’s patience which overcomes his wrath. It is significant that in the final and culminating chapter (Jonah 4) we do not only find the grace formula, recited from memory by Jonah, but also the juxtaposing of the concepts of anger (יָחַר *yīḥar*, Jon. 4:1; חָרָה *ḥārāh*, Jon. 4:4, 4:9 [twice]) and pity/concern (חָסָה *ḥasāh*, Jon. 4:10; אָחַס *’āḥûs*, Jon. 4:11), which is a kind of

¹²⁸ Franz, *Der barmherzige Gott* 121-124.

¹²⁹ For example *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. II, Erwin Fahlbusch et.al., eds. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), which contains no entry for “Geduld”. In the same volume, there are however entries for “Gehorsam” (“Obedience”) and “Gnade” (“Mercy”), which seems inconsistent.

¹³⁰ For example, *Handbuch Theologischer Grundbegriffe*, vol. I, Heinrich Fries, ed. (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1962) 436-441, and *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. IV, Walter Kasper, ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1995) 339-340; both under the entry “Geduld”.

¹³¹ Franz, op.cit. 124.

distant counterpoint or intertextual analogy to the concepts of anger and mercy found in the grace formula, though using different terms. Notable is also that the grace formula finds an “alien” application in Jonah’s speech: whereas the grace formula is proclaimed as praise and thanksgiving, exhortation or supplication in other instances, here it acquires what could be termed a “katamempsic” connotation¹³²: Jonah reproaches God for being merciful, gracious, patient and all-loving; he admonishes God for his expansive *hesed* and sides against the more universalist view of Joel, his fellow prophet in the *dodekapropheton*. God’s patience is manifested in his staying his hand from inflicting doom on Nineveh, in abating his anger. This is what God did many centuries earlier in sparing the nation of Israel; with his sparing of Nineveh his patience assumes a universalist and inclusivist orientation. Within the parameters of the mercy motto, the concept of patience could thus be interpreted as an explication or unfolding of God’s mercy and grace. “His benevolence is so great that it drives him to postpone his wrath for a long time...”¹³³. God retracted his intended visitation on Nineveh out of mercy¹³⁴. It is one of the ways in which his compassion is made noticeable. Although the divine patience manifests in a “non-event”, it nevertheless remains a divine act: through forbearance, God neutralises and dissipates his anger, and lets his mercy and grace be paramount. In the New Testament, there are more than one parable of Jesus which has God’s all-encompassing patience as subject. One such a parable, in which the grace motto is implicit, will be discussed in chapter 5.

2.2.4 **וְרַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת *werab-hesed[we’emet]* (πολυέλεος [καὶ ἀληθινός], “vol liefde [en trouw]”, “groot van goedertierenheid [en trouw]”, “abounding in [steadfast] love”, “plein [de fidélité et] de bonté”, “reich an Huld [und Treue]”, “ricco di grazia [e di fedeltà]”)**

Mention was already made in chapter 1 that the phrase *hesed we’emet* occurs 30 times in the Old Testament and could thus be described as a type of theological or “liturgical *ritornello*”¹³⁵. As has been shown in Table 2.3, the last unit of the mercy formula seems to engender somewhat diverging interpretations and consequent translations. The extent to which this concluding phrase, consisting of two nouns, is interpreted as a single semantic unit (a *hendiadys*) or not has some bearing on the terms employed in translation. There could be little

¹³² μέμψις/καταμέμφομαι: “censure, reproach” (noun/verb).

¹³³ “Sein Wohlwollen ist so groß, daß es ihn treibt, seinen Zorn lange auszuschieben...”, Erich Zenger, *Das Buch Exodus* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1977) 245.

¹³⁴ Gerhard Bodendorfer, “Die Spannung von Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit in der rabbinischen Auslegung mit Schwerpunkt auf der Psalmeninterpretation”, SBS 193 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2000) 177, 191.

¹³⁵ To borrow a phrase from Rocchetta & Manes, “un ritornello liturgico”, Rocchetta & Manes, *Tenerezza 27*, which they use to describe the exclamation כִּי לְעוֹלָם יְיָ חַסְדּוֹ, *kî l’ôlam hasdô*, “for his faithful love lasts forever” (see Psalms 106:1, 107:1, 136:1-26; cf. Ps. 117:2). The first two quoted psalms have a preceding phrase כִּי טוֹב, *ki-tôb*, “for He is good.”

doubt that the Hebrew word-pair seems to connote a single concept in which *'emet* functions as a type of one-word paraphrase of what *hesed* means: it stems from the root \sqrt{mn} , which designates constancy, faithfulness and loyalty, and therefore also signifies the truthfulness and trustworthiness of any commitments made by one party to another. The concept *'emet* could thus be seen as a one-word exposition of the notion of *hesed*: goodness and love could after all only be trustworthy goodness and love if they remain constant and reliable. If it is to be true lovingkindness, it cannot be fickle or intermittent¹³⁶. The word-pair thus forms a *hendiadys*¹³⁷. This view gains support from the fact that in five of the seven instances of the grace formula *'emet* is omitted; the evident explanation is that since constancy, reliability and trustworthiness are intuited as being implicit in the idea of *hesed*, the addition of *'emet* becomes superfluous or pleonastic.

The primacy of *hesed* as a designation for God's love or lovingkindness is attested by several theologians. Mention was already made of Rocchetta and Manes, who typify it as an ever-recurrent motif or *ritornello*. Walther Eichrodt labels it as the "pre-eminent" proposition expressing the covenant community between Yahweh and Israel¹³⁸, and William Lofthouse, sharing the same view of a connection between *hesed* and covenant, claims simply that "...*hesed* is fundamental in Jahveh..."¹³⁹. Wolfram Herrmann states that the noun *hsd* and the verb *jš'* are the most-used Old Testament terms to describe God's beneficial and salutary actions¹⁴⁰. The term appears 245 times in the Old Testament¹⁴¹. Besides its statistic frequency, *hesed* covers a "complex semantic field in which the components mercy, goodness and love are dominant"¹⁴². The precedence of *hesed* as articulation of God's lovingkindness and beneficence also becomes evident from another viewpoint: although \sqrt{rhm} and \sqrt{hnn} evidently have equivalents or roots going back to Mesopotamian and Siro-Canaanite origins, \sqrt{hsd} is *sui generis*, only attested to in the Old Testament¹⁴³. Additionally, although *hesed* is a quality that could also be exercised by humans (often when two parties enter into some kind

¹³⁶ Sonnet 116 by William Shakespeare springs to mind: "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds..."

¹³⁷ "'Loyalty and faithfulness' is a hendiadys, a figure of speech in which two words, connected by a conjunction, connote a single idea", Bernard W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1999) 60.

¹³⁸ Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (London: SCM, 1960) 232.

¹³⁹ Lofthouse, "*Hen*" 35.

¹⁴⁰ "...das gedeihliche Handeln Gottes..."; Herrmann, *Jahweh* 35.

¹⁴¹ Franz, *Der barmherzige Gott* 124 and Rocchetta & Manes, *Tenerezza* 26; this includes instances in which humans show *hesed*.

¹⁴² Hermann Spieckermann, "Gnade: Biblische Perspektiven", *Gottes Liebe zu Israel. Studien zur Theologie des Alten Testaments*, FAT 33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001) 23.

¹⁴³ Hermann Spieckermann, "Wrath and Mercy as Crucial Terms of Theological Hermeneutics", *Divine Wrath and Divine Mercy in the World of Antiquity*, FAT 2:33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 9.

of mutual agreement, understanding or pact) the word-pair *hesed-w^e'emet* is used exclusively for YHWH¹⁴⁴.

There is not consensus whether *hesed* always implies a legal or contractual undertaking between God and a human party. For example, the view that *hesed* is dispensed out of a contractual or “covenantal” obligation is tendered in an important contribution by Nelson Glueck¹⁴⁵. The French theologian André Birmelé is of the same opinion: he observes that the term *hesed* “generally appears within the context of the covenant and underlines God’s trustworthiness within the cadre of the bond that ties Him to his people”¹⁴⁶. Walther Eichrodt likewise situates *hesed* within the matrix of the “covenant community between Yahwe and Israel”, and states specifically that it would be unsatisfactory at this stage (i.e. the pre-exilic stage) to equate YHWH’s lovingkindness with his mercy (*ṣrhm*)¹⁴⁷. Herewith, we are at the heart of a long debate: the view that God shows lovingkindness out of contractual obligation is seen by some scholars as compromising the free, unconditional and undeserved character of God’s love which is bestowed as a gift, and not out of duty. Franz declares that goodness and reliability are so typical of God that He would also do good and act dependably towards parties to whom no obligatory promise has been given¹⁴⁸. This issue is, however, susceptible of a ready solution or synthesis: there could be little doubt that in the Old Testament, the concept of God’s lovingkindness, mercy and grace undergoes a progression from a more particularist to a more universalist viewpoint. Whereas YHWH’s love is initially perceived as being exclusive, solely directed to Israel as chosen nation, the conviction gradually arises, at least as early as during the (post-)exilic era, that God’s love is inclusive, directed to all nations. About this diachronic change in the meaning of *hesed*, Robert Dentan maintains the following: “It is evident, though, whatever may have been the original denotation of the word, that it is frequently used, especially in the later literature, to mean nothing more than ‘love’, ‘lovingkindness’, ‘loyalty’, or ‘steadfast love’ in general, without any necessary implication that a formal covenant exists”¹⁴⁹. Over time, God’s contractual and covenantal *ṣhds* approximates his unsolicited and unconditional *ṣrhm*, a progression hinted at in Eichrodt’s observation

¹⁴⁴ Franz, *Der barmherzige Gott* 125. He also refers to instances in which humans seem to be showing *hesed-we'emet* (Gen. 24:49, 47:29; Jos. 2:14; Hos. 4:1; he mistakenly quotes 1 Sam. 2:15 which clearly has God as subject of the phrase), but says that this does not designate a human characteristic (“Eigenschaft”). “Als Eigenschaft wird *חסד וְאֵמֶת* nur von Jhwh ausgesagt”, *ibid*.

¹⁴⁵ Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967). His original dissertation appeared in 1928. For differing opinions, see for example Alfred Jepsen, “Gnade” 264-268 and William F. Lofthouse, *art.cit.* 32-34.

¹⁴⁶ André Birmelé, “Grâce” 208: “Il [*hesed*] apparaît généralement dans le contexte de l’alliance et souligne la fidélité de Dieu dans le cadre de l’alliance qui le lie au peuple”.

¹⁴⁷ Eichrodt, *Theology* 232, 234.

¹⁴⁸ Franz, *Der barmherzige Gott* 125-126: “Güte ist für Jhwh überhaupt typisch. Wer als solcher gütig und treu ist, wird auch ohne verbindliches Versprechen gütig und treu handeln...”.

¹⁴⁹ Robert C. Dentan, “The literary affinities of Exodus xxxiv 6f.”, *Vetus Testamentum* 13 (Leiden: Brill, 1963) 43.

quoted above. Jonah is the unwilling witness of this expansive and ever-expanding love of God when he attests that YHWH is a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, with a goodness and love that are abundant (*rab*), in this context implying universal, all-encompassing lovingkindness, even destined for the gentiles¹⁵⁰.

Although it has already been stated that *'emet* should be seen as an almost superfluous adjunct to *hesed*, explicating that which is already implicit in the concept of divine love, a few observations about the meaning of this term could nevertheless be made. As noted above, it is derived from \sqrt{mn} and with its cognates designates reliability, trustworthiness, fidelity, constancy and truth(fulness), associations which are also alluded to in the acclamation or affirmation "Amen". To a Western mind imbued with Hellenistic thought categories, the concepts of "reliability" and "truth" as combined in the single Hebrew designation *'emet* may seem somewhat dissimilar in semantic sense; however, to the biblical, Israelite mind they would be inseparable notions, as indeed they are. It was already pointed out in the beginning paragraph of 1.4 that love/lovingness could not be true love if it is fickle and inconstant. Lovingness and constancy are the *verso* sides of each other. The proof whether love is true, the vindication of true love, lies in the fact that it remains uninterrupted and undiminished. The trustworthiness of love thus implies truthfulness and vice versa, just as a plumb line could be trusted because it shows a "true", "right" angle to the ground, or a witness is called trustworthy because they tell the truth. It is striking that, although of a different linguistic family, Germanic languages have, or used to have, the same combination of the concepts of truth and reliability embodied in a single term as is the case with the Hebrew \sqrt{mn} : an earlier English word for "reliable"/"constant" is "true"¹⁵¹. The kinship between this word and its equivalent in other Germanic languages, namely "treu" or "trou" ("trustworthy") is clear¹⁵². The same conjoining of the meaning of constancy and truth is also found in the archaic English term "troth", which is still occasionally used during recital of the marriage vows ("I pledge thee my troth"): besides its clear correlation to "truth", "troth" uttered as a solemnly pledged promise, entails conjugal fidelity and faithfulness.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. José Luis Barriocanal, "Ex 34,6-7" 381-403, and Jörg Frey, "'God is Love'. On the Textual Tradition and Semantics of a Core Expression of the Christian Notion of God", *Divine Wrath and Divine Mercy in the World of Antiquity*, Reinhard G. Kratz & Hermann Spieckermann, eds., FAT 2:33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 203. The universalist dimension of God's love will be explored further in chapter 5.

¹⁵¹ For example: in a poem by the martyred Jesuit priest and poet Robert Southwell (ca.1561-1595), "A Child my Choice", we find the line "All times will find Him true", that is, trustworthy (Afrikaans "trou", Dutch "trouw", German "treu").

¹⁵² The switching of "u" and "e" ("true"/"treu") is probably due to metathesis, which is even more probable if an earlier, voiced concluding "w" instead of unvoiced "u" is supposed (of which the unvoiced remnant still exists in Dutch, "trouw").

Finally, it must again be emphasised that the word-pair “loyal love”, or the single term “love/lovingkindness/goodness”, should always be understood as referring to manifest, intentional and ongoing acts of God. “In every circumstance, *hesed* supposes an *intentional act*”¹⁵³. Rocchetto and Manes are eminent proponents of this “divine deed dimension”: they point out that cognates of *ḥsd*, like *ḥāsādīm* and *ḥasdē*, are used to indicate the beneficial deeds (*i benefice*) of God, and that, used in conjunction with *‘āsāh* (“do”/“make”), they designate a real-time completion of the divine intent, the fulfilment of an accomplishment by God¹⁵⁴. Likewise, Alfred Jepsen succinctly states that *hesed* does not firstly mean an attitude (“Gesinnung”) but an activity (“Handlung”)¹⁵⁵. It is inconceivable that the divine, steadfast love could be merely a feeling, attitude or state of mind. The emotional disposition of the subject is not sufficient proof of commitment to the party/object to whom those feelings are oriented. The supposed feelings of the subject can only be confirmed experientially or existentially by the object through practical conduct by the subject. God’s lovingkindness is realised, is proven to be real and true, through his constant, ongoing deeds in the life of the collective or of the individual, that is, through his reliability. He is אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, *’ehyeh ’ašer ’ehyeh*: He promises what He does, and He does what He has promised. He is the *apotheosis* of trust and truth. Heinrich Spieckermann describes *hesed* as the “crystallisation point of God’s compassionate, kindly and loving inclination towards the individual, his people, and the world”¹⁵⁶. It is thus possible to see the declaration of the steadfast divine love with which the mercy motto concludes as a culmination point: God’s *hesed* is the *summum*, the sum and the summit, of all his attributes of benevolence¹⁵⁷.

2.3 The grace formula as semantic unit

In the rabbinic tradition, 13 *Middôt* or characteristics of God are deduced from Exodus 34:6-7 (the two verses which comprise the mercy formula plus its addendum)¹⁵⁸. The number is somewhat arbitrary, and William H.C. Propp, after referring to verses 6 and 7 as a “composite account”, succinctly states “But I do not believe that we are meant to count anything here”¹⁵⁹. Cornelis Houtman, in his commentary on these verses, refers to the terms “merciful and gracious”, first introduced in Exodus 33:19, and the rest of the terms that make up the grace

¹⁵³ “In ogni circostanza, *hesed* suppone un *atto intenzionale*”, Rocchetta & Manes *Tenerezza* 26 [italics in the original].

¹⁵⁴ Italian “compimento reale” and “adempimento della prestazioni”, Rocchetta & Manes, op.cit. 27.

¹⁵⁵ Jepsen, “Gnade” 261.

¹⁵⁶ Spieckermann, “Gnade” 23.

¹⁵⁷ The high frequency of *ḥsd* and its general pre-eminence in the Old Testament, as was pointed out in the discussion, lend further support to this view.

¹⁵⁸ Christoph Dohmen, *Exodus 19-40*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 2004) 358. He also points out that there are variations in the number of *Middôt*.

¹⁵⁹ William H.C. Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 2A, William Foxwell Albright & David Noel Freedman, eds. (New York: Doubleday, 2006) 610.

motto (“slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness”) as “more or less synonymous terms” depicting YHWH’s character¹⁶⁰. When reviewing the divine characteristics as they are incorporated in the grace motto, the conclusion must be made that the motto is in last instance not to be interpreted by dissecting it into its constituent parts. It should be conceived of in a synthetic, and not in an analytic or deductive way. In the grace formula we find the embodiment of a single semantical and rhetorical idea, namely that of the divine benevolence and beneficence which have been felicitously described by Abraham Joshua Heschel under the nomen “divine pathos”¹⁶¹. It is a loaded or charged semantical unit because the specific terms are involved in a constant counterpoint, mutually evoking various aspects of God’s goodwill and good works. However, this polyphonic interplay is ultimately subsumed in an indivisible whole. It is not conceivable to posit the mercy of God and simultaneously to discard the notions of divine grace, forbearance and trustworthy, truthful love. It is not possible to posit the patience of God without co-opting a notion of his mercy. Each element is the concomitant of all the others. An analogy may be drawn from another discipline to illustrate and support this view: in Platonic philosophy, the good, the true and the beautiful are perceived of as being one or unified. It is not possible to evince goodness without at the same time also evincing beauty and truth. Likewise, beauty always has as its corollaries truth and goodness, and truth as its corollaries beauty and goodness. Something cannot be false and good at the same time. Augustine adopts this Platonic view when he assigns these Ideals or “transcendentals” to God. It is an insight for which rational proof is unnecessary and almost unreasonable; it is an axiom which is simply intuited to be manifestly true¹⁶². Thus it is with the grace formula: all the divine attributes are always invoked by any single one.

In addition to the abovementioned conceptual reasoning, further supporting arguments for interpreting the mercy formula as a single semantic unit could be advanced: it was already stated that each of the phrases *rahûm w^eḥannûn* as well as *rab-ḥesed we’emet* forms a *hendiadys*. Georg Fischer and Dominik Markl are of the opinion that the entire second phrase *’erek ’appayîm w^erab-ḥesed we’emet* (“slow to anger and full of steadfast love”) is an explication of the opening word-pair¹⁶³. Additionally, though somewhat less convincingly, they respectively see “slow to anger” as a description of the divine mercy” (\sqrt{rhm}), and the term “steadfast love” as a revelation of the divine grace (\sqrt{hnn})¹⁶⁴. At the very least, the above

¹⁶⁰ Houtman, Cornelis, *Exodus*, vol. 3, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament, Cornelis Houtman et.al., eds. (Leuven: Peeters, 2000) 708.

¹⁶¹ A theme to be pursued later in this chapter.

¹⁶² There is also a parallel to be found in the German Idealist philosophy of the 19th century with its concepts of Truth, Goodness and Beauty being co-present in the Eternal Idea.

¹⁶³ Georg Fischer & Dominik Markl, *Das Buch Exodus*, Neuer Stuttgarter Kommentar Altes Testament 2 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katolisches Bibelwerk, 2009) 356.

¹⁶⁴ Fischer & Markl, *Exodus*; this possibility is also mooted by William Johnstone, *Exodus 20-40*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, R.Scott Nash et.al., eds. (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2014) 408.

observations give further indication of how semantically intertwined the respective terms of the formula are. One has to conclude that they comprise a single semantic entity which may be labeled a *hendiatetra*, forming an overarching concept supported fourfold.

Thus, the grace formula constitutes a *Konvolut*, a single, blended convolution, in which the contributory elements unify into one theme¹⁶⁵, or worded differently, unify into one *sumfonia*. This composition is not only a repository of the biblical understanding of the divine lovingkindness, but also the idiomatic embodiment of the rhetoric of the Old Testament. This will be the next focus of attention.

2.4 The grace formula: Correlation to the divine deeds

It is a fundamental tenet of this thesis that the divine characteristics of grace, mercy, compassion, forbearance and loyal lovingkindness could never be adequately discussed or understood without factoring in the “divine deed dimension”. God’s beneficial deeds are the proof and vindication of his disposition of compassion and mercy, patience and lovingkindness. Conversely, the divine deeds are conceived upon, or substantiated by the divine benevolence as expressed in the epithets of the mercy motto. This correlation between God’s benevolent intentions and his beneficent interventions is described by Nathan C. Lane in the following way in an article about the relation of the mercy motto (which he names “credo”) in Exodus 34:6 and the Psalms containing the mercy formula (in this case Psalm 145): “In a surprise turn, however, it is not the ‘works’, ‘deeds’, or ‘mighty acts’ that are given as the substance of this praise. Instead, the credo’s attributes of compassion and graciousness, greatness in *hesed* and slowness to anger are given as the substance of God’s mighty acts (145.8). [...] The psalmist uses the credo to assert that the Lord’s reign is good, not because of the Exodus or creation but because of God’s compassionate and gracious character”¹⁶⁶. The postulate that there is always a mutual and reciprocal correlation between God’s works and his wonders will receive attention in the following subsections, firstly by taking note of the context within which the grace motto appears, and secondly by investigating the rhetoric in which the grace motto is embodied.

¹⁶⁵ Horst Preuß, *Theologie* 277, calls it “ein kleines Kompendium”. Markus Witte states that YHWH’s being is described “in a compressed/concentrated way” (“in komprimierter Weise”) in the grace motto; see “‘Barmherzigkeit und Zorn Gottes’ im Alten Testament am Beispiel des Buchs Jesus Sirach”, *FAT* 2:33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 180.

¹⁶⁶ Nathan C. Lane, “Yhwh’s Gracious and Compassionate Reign: Exodus 34.6-7 and the Psalter”, in J. Kaplan & R. Williamson Jr., eds., *Imagination, Ideology and Inspiration: Echoes of Brueggemann in a New Generation* (Sheffield, 2015) 69-82, quoted from Alessandro Coniglio, “‘Gracious and Merciful is Yhwh...’ (Psalm 145:8): The Quotation of Exodus 34:6 in Psalm 145 and Its Role in the Holistic Design of the Psalter”, *Liber Annuus* 67 (Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 2017) 32, fn.13.

2.4.1 The context of the grace formula

It is strikingly obvious, but perhaps not pointed out often enough, that wherever mention is made of God's characteristics or attributes in general, but even more so when the grace motto is specifically quoted, there are always references in the immediate context to God's deeds. The divine deeds are interpreted as being a manifestation of the divine disposition. Stated in other terms: the matrix of the divine attributes or qualities is always God's works, accomplishments, mighty deeds. As mentioned before, God's attributes have a transitive orientation: they do not remain mere affections, but are actuated and directed towards mankind, having an effect, achieving a practical result. This will be an ever-recurring theme - a theological refrain - in the present thesis. In the Bible, God's essence only becomes known and palpable through his agency.

The seven instances of the mercy formula have been quoted above. Next, the various references to God's deeds found within the immediate context of the quoted formula are listed to highlight the mutual reciprocity of the reciting of the grace formula and the mention of God's works. It must be noted that the dimension of divine agency is not exhausted by reference to individual terms in the context denoting divine activity, like "miracles" or "wonders"; more often than not, the entire context is imbued with a sense of the divine, intervening activity, such as in Nehemiah 9:6-31, so that any "atomistic" reduction to the semantics of single terms is subsumed in a higher and holistic view of God's acts.

Table 2.4: The grace formula and its context of divine deeds

Grace motto	References to divine deeds within the wider context
Exodus 34:7	34:10 I shall do such mighty marvels as have never been performed... All the peoples...shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing which I shall do for you
Nehemiah 9:17	The whole of Neh. 9:6-38 is a narrative of praise, continuously reciting God's great deeds throughout Israel's history.
Psalms 86:15	86:8 ...no deeds compare with yours 86:10 ...your works are wonderful 86:13 ...you have rescued me
Psalms 103:8	103:2 ...his benefits 103:3 He heals all my ills 103:4 He rescues me from death's pit 103:5 He satisfies me with all good 103:7 ...his mighty deeds
Psalms 145:8	145:4 ...your works...your mighty deeds 145:6 ...your mighty and terrible acts 145:12 ...your mighty deeds 145:14 ...unchanging in all his works

Joel 2:13	2:11 ...his is a mighty army 2:13 ...ready always to relent when he threatens disaster 2:14 It may be he will turn back and relent and leave a blessing behind him 2:20 He has done great things! 2:21 ...for the LORD has done great things 2:26 ...who has done wonderful things for you
Jonah 4:2 ¹⁶⁷	4:1 ...he [God] relented and did not inflict on them the punishment he had threatened

The above synopsis makes it clear that the individual units of the formulaic *text* find their significance in a wider referential *context*, namely that of the divine activity. It could again be pointed out that, although the text of the formula is framed within the context of God's deeds - a context which is the determinant of the content and meaning of the formula - and although it is possible to determine the general occasion for, or literary setting of, the various appearances of the formula as they stand in the canon, there is difference of opinion whether it is possible to establish the specific, original *Sitz im Leben* of the respective instances of the grace motto¹⁶⁸. Likewise, there is not consensus regarding the dating of the different appearances of the formula in terms of a *Traditionsgeschichte*. Reasons were advanced why these aspects were not considered as directly relevant to the present research: they are aspects which are operative within a diachronic perspective and analysis, whereas a study of the semantics and context of a text has a synchronic orientation. Therefore, matters pertaining to a form and tradition history of the mercy motto are left aside, as the intent of this study is to investigate the meaning of the formula as signifier as it stands within a fixed intertextual and canonic context.

The connectedness and indivisibility of the divine attributes and the divine deeds also become clear from another viewpoint. Not infrequently, words which in a grammar of Western languages would be termed "abstract nouns" (like *tsedeq*, "righteousness", or *hesed*, "love") and which in the Hebrew have God as subject, are declinated into terms implying concrete deeds, real accomplishments by God. God's "righteousness" (רַדְּף, *tsedeq*) thus becomes his

¹⁶⁷ It was already discussed under 2.3 that the occurrence of the grace formula in the Book of Jonah is somewhat unique, as there are no overt references to God's "deeds" or "works" finding concrete realisation. A partial explanation for this absence could be that fact that, given its literary genre, it has a limited context and narrowed focus which do not allow for enough literary scope to accommodate references to God's deeds. At the very least, though, there is reference to the divine activity in a covert way: in Nineveh's case, God's work consists of desisting, of "not-doing".

¹⁶⁸ See for example Hermann Spieckermann, "Barmherzig..." 18: "Die Auswertung aller relevanten exegetischen Anhaltspunkte [of the formula] weist auf eine enge Verbindung der Gnadenformel mit der Gebetspraxis des israelitischen Kultus hin, ohne daß die Ermittlung ihres Sitzes im Leben noch gelingen könnte." For a more positive view, see Jan Christian Gertz, ed., *Grundinformation Altes Testament*, 3. Auflage (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009) 429, and Scharbert, "Ex 34,6" 132-133.

“righteous deeds” (*tsidqôt*, plural)¹⁶⁹; his “love” or “lovingkindness” (*hesed*, singular) is conjugated into “acts of love and kindness” (*hasdîm*, plural)¹⁷⁰. That the divine attributes are always accomplished in a practical, concrete way in the life of the individual believer or the collective also applies to other concepts which tend to be spiritualised, like “forgiveness of sins”: for example, when in Psalm 103:8 the psalmist proclaims that God forgives all his sins, he finds the reason for this reality in the fact that God has healed his sickness¹⁷¹. This knowledge then impels him to recite the grace formula in verse 8.

The question should be asked whether this “deed dimension” is an aspect unique to Israel’s understanding of God. Walther Eichrodt points out that the ancient, Semitic use of the name for the divinity, ‘el, supposed an understanding that a strong bond existed between the “divine activity and the social life of the community”, especially when this divine epithet was joined with verbs like “is merciful” or “helps”, evidencing that El was not a remote, abstract being, but a positive presence in the midst of the specific tribe¹⁷². On the other hand, Brueggemann points out that Albrecht Alt made a sharp distinction between the pre-Israelite and Israelite understanding of gods like *El-Roi* and *El-Elyon* which were linked to specific places and therefore assumed a “static and fixed” character, and the Israelite “God of the fathers” which was linked to a person and was perceived as “a dynamic agent which is mobile and on the move with intentionality”¹⁷³. He also refers to Martin Noth’s views that YHWH was understood as a “warrior God” who was “an active agent capable of taking an armed initiative, *and thus is like no other god*”¹⁷⁴. One could add that, even if non-Israelite deities were to a greater or lesser extent indeed understood and worshipped as agents active in this world, there still existed a far-reaching divergence between the Israelite and the non-Israelite perceptions of the divine activity: “...the covenant community between Yahweh and Israel found its aptest expression not so much in the attribution of power, which can be paralleled in all religions, as in a whole series of quite different propositions. Pre-eminent among these is that of Yahweh’s

¹⁶⁹ Brueggemann, *Theology* 131; Hossfeld, Frank-Lothar & Erich Zenger, eds., *Psalms*, vol. 3, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2011) 34-35. Hans-Joachim Kraus states “צדקות־וְהַסֵּדִים sind die in der Geschichte gewirkten Großtaten Jahwes...”, *Psalmen II*, 3rd ed., Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament XV/2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen, 1966) 703.

¹⁷⁰ “Not rare is the use of the plural (*ḥāsādîm*, *hasdê*) to indicate the beneficent deeds [Italian *i benefici*] of the Lord...”, Rocchetta & Manes, *Tenerezza* 27.

¹⁷¹ To the Israelite understanding, there was a causal connection between sin and sickness: the second tended to be perceived of as a consequence of the first. In Psalm 103 verse 5, these two dimensions are connected by the use of a *parallelismus membrorum*. This may also explain the response of Jesus to the scandalised reaction of the scribes when He told the paralysed man that his sins were forgiven (Mark 2:6-7): as proof of the reality that the man’s sins were really forgiven, He then healed him from his paralysis. This New Testament “divine deed dimension” will be explored further in chapter 5.

¹⁷² Eichrodt, *Theology* 179, 190.

¹⁷³ Brueggemann, *op.cit.* 21-22.

¹⁷⁴ Brueggemann, *Theology* 23 [italics added].

lovingkindness”¹⁷⁵. In short: to the extent that gentile deities were perceived as being active, this activity tended to be ascribed to their power, whereas in Israel’s case, the divine activity was interpreted as being a manifestation of God’s love. One does find epithets like “merciful” used by other nations to describe their gods, but Mathias Franz asserts that, even though there is a generic conception of divine activity, the attributes which are ascribed to the Ugaritic El, like *ltpn* and *dpid* (the Ugaritic equivalents to *raḥûm* and *ḥannûn*) are not really explicated or made tangible, but seem almost to be a kind of Homeric stereotype deprived of practical application¹⁷⁶. Franz adds that it is not clear whether there are any active consequences arising from the Ugaritic El’s *ltpn* and *dpd*¹⁷⁷. Regarding the question mooted above, a further perspective of Rocchetta’s could be noted: besides the significance of Hebrew words like *√tdqh* and *√hsd* which in the plural denote accomplishments or benificent acts of God, as discussed above, he also mentions the Hebrew plural term *nifla’ôt* (נִפְלְאוֹת, cf. Ps. 119:18), “events” or “signs” which designate “salvific interventions/presentations” (*interventi salvifici*) and which gave to the Israelite understanding of history a linearity consisting of a series of singular and unique incidents/events (*avenimenti singolari*), in contrast to the circular and cyclic conceptions of natural religions¹⁷⁸. Likewise, Claus Westermann contrasts the psalms of the Old Testament in which the historical wonders of God are related to the songs of the Near and Middle East in which the atemporal qualities of the godhead are favoured¹⁷⁹. In summary: the Hebrew understanding of the divine activity is essentially and qualitatively different from that of the nations that surrounded them: YHWH is a God not limited to special locations, not motivated by a show of power, not unpredictable, but impelled by his care and concern which find expression in his willingness to actively intervene in the life of his people always and everywhere. His compassion and lovingkindness are constant and unfailing and lasts forever.

That which is understood as the divine disposition always finds its complement in the divine deeds. The context in which the grace formula is embedded bears witness to this process and confirms the real, intervening divine activity in the life of the person or the people. Without this awareness of the transition of divine benevolence into divine beneficence, Israel’s faith would be without content. It was through their experience of God’s intervening and beneficial agency

¹⁷⁵ Eichrodt, *Theology* 232. Another possible difference is that the mercy and goodness of Israel’s God gradually assume a universalist dimension, in contrast to earlier Jewish and non-Jewish “localised” conceptions of God’s agency.

¹⁷⁶ Franz, *Der barmherzige Gott* 79-80. With the term “Homeric stereotype” he means epithets used in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to describe perceived qualities of their subject (“wine-coloured sea” or “quick-footed Achilles” would be two examples).

¹⁷⁷ “Welche Handlungen Els die Konsequenz aus *ltpn* und *dpid* sind, bleibt offen”, Franz, *ibid*.

¹⁷⁸ Rocchetta & Manes, *Tenerezza* 57.

¹⁷⁹ Westermann, *Das Loben Gottes in den Psalmen* (München: Evangelisches Verlagsanstalt, 1953) 47f.

that they came to the conclusion that He existed, that He was full of mercy and grace, patience and faithful love, and that He maintained a bond with them. Conversely, they experienced the absence of God's loving and caring activity as an absence of God Himself, as is attested many times in the Old Testament individually or collectively¹⁸⁰. If it were not for the indelible association in Hebrew understanding between God's presence and his performance, the absence of divine intervention would not necessarily have led to the conclusion that God Himself was *in absentia*. Horst Preuss dismisses the suggestion by Spieckermann that the grace formula should receive consideration as a possible central and unifying theme for an Old Testament theology by reasoning that this begs the question, namely, "How does Israel in the first instance know that God is 'merciful'?"¹⁸¹. It seems as though Preuss does not acknowledge the correlation between divine mercy and divine intervention. Israel knew that God is merciful through experiencing his merciful saving deeds. The deeds are the *a priori* event, the answer to Preuss's begged question; the grace formula is the *a posteriori* conclusion that the God who does these kindly deeds must indeed be merciful and gracious. The mercy motto, as an acknowledgement of the divine beneficent attributes, is not a statement which was arrived at through conceptual and analytical reasoning, but the result of an existential experience from which certain conclusions about God were inferred. Rocchetta and Manes state that terms like \sqrt{rhm} , \sqrt{hnn} and \sqrt{hsd} imply a conception of God which is not the outcome of abstract philosophising, but is derived from the awareness that God intervenes in history and there does his wonderful works of grace¹⁸². Incorporated into its wider context of divine deeds, the grace formula is not an abstraction about the essence of God. It is an attestation about the presence of God, "presenting" Himself as merciful and loving through his practical accomplishments. Stated yet differently: the grace formula is not an ontological construct about the divine benevolence as an abstract, intransitive attitude, but rather what could be coined an "ergological" confession, acknowledging the divine beneficence as a concrete, transitive, intervening activity¹⁸³. It is this process which Abraham Heschel has in mind when he states that the divine pathos (his collective noun for God's mercy, grace, patience and love) must not be understood as a psychological denotation, merely signifying an *intent*, but as a theological connotation, signifying the transitive aspect (one could say the *event*) of God's pathos¹⁸⁴. Heschel repeatedly emphasises this theme, for example: "The idea

¹⁸⁰ See Psalms 12:1, 13:1-2, 22:1, 44:24, Isaiah 63:15-16a and Lamentations 5:20 for some examples of this experience.

¹⁸¹ "Es muß ja immer zuvor gesagt werden, woher Israel zum Beispiel weiß, daß JHWH 'barmherzig' ist", Preuß, *Theologie* 27, fn. 122.

¹⁸² "Il Signore cui esse guarda, infatti, non è il frutto di un'astrazione filosofica...ma Colui che interviene nella storia e vi opera le sue meraviglie di grazia", Rocchetta & Manes, op.cit. 76.

¹⁸³ "Ergonomical" would have been a more adequate term if it were not for its established association with technology, with terms like "ergonomic design" referring to streamlining, energy-efficiency etc.

¹⁸⁴ Heschel, *Prophets* II 5, 6.

of the divine pathos is not a personification of God but an exemplification of divine reality, an illustration or illumination of His concern. It does not represent a substance, but an act or a relationship”¹⁸⁵. He uses certain other words and their opposites to convey the dimension of divine deeds as fundamental to the understanding of the biblical message, like “essence” versus “presence”, “fact” against “act”, “essence” versus “appearance”¹⁸⁶. Many more antonymic word-pairs which illustrate the dimension of “divine ergology” versus a conceptual view of “deistic ontology” or “theontology” could be tendered, as will be attempted in the following table. It is, however, imperative to point out that this antonymic dualism would not have existed in the Hebrew mind: for the Israelite believer, the two dimensions would hardly be distinguishable. It is to assist a Western mind imbued with abstract and analytical categories of thought that this dualistic *schema* has to be presented.

Table 2.5: Terms denoting an abstract “ontology” versus terms denoting a practical “ergology”¹⁸⁷

Ontological concepts	Ergological concepts
Abstract, <i>a se</i>	Relational, <i>pro nobis</i>
Affective	Effective
Attributes	Activities
Being	Doing
<i>Datum</i>	<i>Factum</i>
Detachment	Involvement
<i>Ens/essere/essence</i>	<i>Agens/agere/agency</i>
Essence	Presence
Incommunicable	Communicable
Intent	Event
Intransitive	Transitive
Isolational	Situational
<i>Noumen</i>	<i>Pathos</i>
Passive	Active
Philosophy	Epiphany
Savoir	Connaître
Stasis	Dunamis
Substantial	Functional
Sufficiency	Efficiency
Transcendence	Immanence
Withdrawn	Intervening

¹⁸⁵ Heschel, *Prophets II* 53.

¹⁸⁶ Heschel, op.cit. 58, 227, 265.

¹⁸⁷ The contrasting words “being-doing”, “essence-presence”, “noumen-pathos” and “substantial-functional” are used by Heschel, and the word-pair affective-effective by Rocchetta & Manes.

In the previous paragraph, the observation was made that ideally, as was the case in Old Testament times, the divine attributes and the divine actions ought not to be intuited as being two separate dimensions. To the Hebrew consciousness, the two aspects were indistinguishable, each simultaneously summoning up the other. Thinking in dualistic categories seems to be the mixed blessing of a Western mind, a tendency which could also go too far, leading to a kind of separationism or dualism. Matthias Franz may serve as a possible example. In his valuable study of the grace formula, under the heading “The Syntax of Speech about God” he makes a kind of dualistic distinction between Hebrew adjectives, which he accords the function of designating the characteristics of a person, and participles, which he accords the function of designating the actions of a person¹⁸⁸. In the concluding section of his monograph, he transposes this type of separation to a higher level: he states that in Old Testament theology, the phenomenon of the divine historic deeds of salvation was often put forward as indicating that which is most typical of God, but adds that this view does not sufficiently take into account the characteristics of God, a reasoning by which he separates the two dimensions. He goes as far as speaking about a “Theology of historic activity” (“Theologie des geschichtlichen Handelns”) and a “Theology of characteristics” (“Theologie der Eigenschaften”), although he admits that they should be “partners”¹⁸⁹.

Even though a dualistic notion of the divine deeds and divine disposition should be avoided, and the aim of any Old and New Testament theology and dogmatics rather should be to integrate the divine ergological and ontological dimensions conceptually, a case could be made out that the aspect of God’s doing should be given priority to the aspect of God’s being. This claim to priority becomes evident from the fact that Israel came to the conclusion of who and how God was through experiencing his merciful deeds. The divine pathos was *indeed* experienced by believers as a *factum* in the original sense of the word, as something manifestly and patently made, manufactured or wrought by God. From this fact they were able to draw conclusions about the *persona* of God. “In all instances, the Israelite attempted to understand his fate by means of the divine activity. He made an effort to find meaning in Jahweh’s doing, and thus formed his understanding of God...”¹⁹⁰. Preuss formulates the same priority as follows: “The knowledge of YHWH has to do with the foregoing activity of YHWH,

¹⁸⁸ Franz, *Der barmherzige Gott* 26.

¹⁸⁹ Franz, *op.cit.* 266. An inkling of this dualistic view was already created by Franz in the opening pages of his contribution, where he contends that a “one-sided fixation” on the divine activity in history has the disadvantage of neglecting statements about the divine attributes. Surely, there could in fact never be enough attention given to God’s deeds, as statements about his attributes are derived from his activities and are thus complemented by the statements concerning his activity.

¹⁹⁰ “Der Israelit versuchte in jedem Falle, sein Geschick von göttlichem Wirksamwerden her zu verstehen. Er bemühte sich, Jahwes Tun zu deuten und entwickelte deshalb seine Vorstellung über Gott...”, Hermann, *Jahweh* 8.

not with his being and not with human reflection or speculation. And this activity of YHWH has as its goal the knowledge of God. This knowledge is the ultimate meaning of the activity of YHWH¹⁹¹. “God’s disclosure of himself is not grasped speculatively, not expounded in the form of a lesson; it is as he breaks in on the life of his people in his dealings with them...that he grants them knowledge of his being”¹⁹². In short: The divine *persona* is revealed through the divine *pathos*; God reveals who and how He is through his deeds¹⁹³. It is because of this view that Preuss requires any search for a centre of the Old Testament to be oriented towards God’s activity, and not his being. It is against this background that any New Testament and Biblical theology should be conceived. It is also against this background that certain reservations should be voiced about an assertion made by Ron Highfield: “In Scripture, however, the most important way of knowing God is hearing”¹⁹⁴. He poses this statement in an attempt to question or emendate Wolfhart Pannenberg’s view that revelation is limited to “public, historical events”. However, without disparaging the importance that Highfield attaches to divine revelation through hearing, the view that revelation primarily happens through hearing is problematic. Hearing is subsequent to speaking. Apart from the conceptual problematics engendered by the notion of God Himself speaking as opposed to the notion that “God speaking” is a type of poetic conceit, the question must be asked whether hearing from God, or hearing about God via the witness of others, is not only secondary. It would not be unjustified to state that primarily, and prior to the hearing event, comes the experience of an objective divine reality “interrupting” the life of believers. This antecedent experience of divine intervention consequently gives birth to words and sentences which, spoken in witness, praise,

¹⁹¹ Preuss, *Theology* 206.

¹⁹² Eichrodt, *Theology* 37.

¹⁹³ Although only tangential to the present discussion, certain reservations about Karl Barth’s view of revelation could be tentatively mentioned. He asserts that the full godhead, the “whole God”, is revealed in and through divine revelation so that there is no “divine residue” [my words] which remains unrevealed. However, this is at best an intuitive and at worst a speculative statement. We simply do not know whether God “exhausts” Himself in revelation; whether there is nothing of Him which remains unrevealed after He has revealed Himself to the extent that He chose. This notion of Barth’s could on the other hand be preserved if it is co-opted within the view promulgated above that there exists a unity and correspondence between God’s being and his doing. In order to maintain his view, Barth must have a preconceived notion that God’s being and his doing coincide fully. The least speculative way may be to describe the divine activities as comprising a subset with regard to the “complete” divine being: God is nothing less than what He reveals through his works, but at the same time He may be much more. Likewise, there should be reservations in a theology of the Old Testament about the Barthian idea of God as “*der ganz Andere*” (if only when this description is perhaps taken out of context): God acts in such a way that humans are able to ascribe comprehensible epithets to Him, like “merciful”, “loving” and so forth. To that extent, He could not be described as “the wholly Other” or “the entirely Different”. Again, He is “much more”, as Barth rightly advocates in a somewhat different way, but “nothing less”. “God is not, as with OTTO and KARL BARTH, *ganz anders*; if men would know how God acts to them, in the O.T. [sic] view, let them think of the way they act to one another”, Lofthouse, “Hen” 34 [capitals and italics in original].

¹⁹⁴ Highfield, *Great is the Lord* 7.

thanksgiving or confession, like the mercy formula, may also serve as revelation. With these remarks, we have arrived at the next section.

2.4.2 The grace formula: Embodiment of ergological rhetoric

It is not only the context of the grace formula that attests to the divine deeds. The rhetoric of the grace formula also serves as an attestation of the divine deed dimension because it is the incorporation of Hebrew speech about God's wondrous works. This idiomatic aspect of Hebrew speech will also serve as entry point for the methodology to be followed in investigating the relevance of the mercy motto for a theology of the Old Testament. In this respect, the study engages with notions tendered by Old Testament theologians whose views regarding the verballity of Old Testament speech (as opposed to nominalistic categories of speech in Indo-European languages) have already been referred to, such as von Rad, Westermann and Brueggemann. The proposed methodology which will be followed to demonstrate the potentiality of the grace formula in expressing the characteristic speech of the Old Testament will be the following: widening concentric circles will be drawn to conceptualise the argument, first by considering the individual word and its capacity in the Hebrew language, secondly by referring to the syntax of Old Testamentic sentences about God's activity, and lastly by placing the individual words, integrated into sentences, within the larger category of narrative recitals (*au* von Rad), investigating their syntactic and semantic cohesion within a contextual and intertextual matrix¹⁹⁵.

2.4.2.1 Character of the Hebrew word

Mention was already made under 2.1 of Mathias Franz, who describes Hebrew nouns implying divine activity as *Wirknomina*, a term which acknowledges an awareness of the "divine deed dimension" with which such "active nouns" are invested. However, he does not sufficiently develop this insight. He neglects to include adjectives and adverbs which in the Hebrew have the same active character than the nouns. One could state that "merciful" is as much a *Wirkadjectivum* as "mercy" is a *Wirknomen*. In a Western mind, both denotations would readily be perceived of as passive states of mind, to indicate a mere abstract, detached disposition – thus it is that such nouns are termed "abstract nouns" in Western grammars, to which one could add the term "abstract adjectives" (e.g. "merciful") or "abstract adverbs" (e.g. "mercifully"). However, there is a fairly general consensus that it is the verb which is accorded priority in Hebrew. Johann Gottfried Herder pointed out more than two centuries ago that

¹⁹⁵ It is beyond the the scope and competence of this study to sail in the deep waters of the philosophy of language. The less rarified air of grammar, syntax and semantics will rather be the "biosphere" of the present thesis.

Hebrew is mainly conceived of in terms of verbs¹⁹⁶. It is a language characterised by its “verbality”, suggesting activity, not passivity, and events, not categories. It is against this background that certain views expressed by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig concerning their German translation of the Old Testament¹⁹⁷ must be understood: they endeavoured to return to biblical speech about God which preserved the active and verbal character of the Hebrew language and which was removed from static and abstract Greek connotations. Moreover, they voiced the opinion that the ideal would be for Scripture to be spoken words which reflected the dynamism of Hebrew speech, and not written words which conveyed a sense of solidification, therefore displaying what one could term a kind of “denotational inertia”¹⁹⁸. To the Hebrew mentality, a word supposed a deed, and the deed was the consummation of the word; the two were hardly separable. It should further be borne in mind that in Hebrew, a member of the Semitic linguistic family, verbs are not subject to the type of conjugation and temporal indication which in general typify languages of the Indo-European family. A verb describing events in the life of Israel is not susceptible of being allocated tenses which distinguish the near past from the remote past or from the present or future: tenses like the “past imperfect”, “past perfect” or *plusquamperfectum* are alien to Hebrew. The action described by the verb is not relegated to the past; the retelling of the event reconstitutes the indicative or present character of the verb and thus also “presents” (in ambivalent sense) the matter or event anew.

In this respect, another typical aspect of the Hebrew language must be highlighted, namely that inherent in the Hebrew life and world view there existed the conviction that words themselves had a real and tangible effect, that they were efficacious. A word was not merely a mouthful of air, an empty utterance without consequences. It was not simply a label, but it had the inherent power to bring about that which it designated. Speaking a word also established the reality indicated by the word. Referring to the world of the Ancient Near East,

¹⁹⁶ “...bei den Ebräern ist beinahe alles Verbum”, Johann Gottfried Herder, *Vers. Werke 11* p.227; quoted by Alfred Adam, *Lerhbuch der Dogmengeschichte, Bd.1: Die Zeit der alten Kirche* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1965) 93. A few cursory observations should be noted: Augustine and Spinoza both perceived language as being constituted by nouns; cf. Adam, op.cit. 93-94 and Oliver Davies, *A Theology of Compassion: Metaphysics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 78f., 193. The possible reason for this nominal/nominalistic interpretation in the case of Augustine is that some Platonic categories with their favouring of abstract nouns were operative in his thought. In the case of Spinoza, the reason is to be found in the tenets of his own “Substanzphilosophie”. Developments in the philosophy of language have also given rise to an interest in the “verbality” of language with insights proffered by, amongst others, Michel Foucault, who maintained that all speech is predicated on verbs, Emmanuel Levinas with his notion of the “verbality of being”, and John Milbank, with his notion of the *verbum* as divine art; see for example Davies, op.cit. 133f., 149.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. section 2.2.1, p. 31, fn. 101.

¹⁹⁸ Horvitz, Rivka, “Moses Mendelssohns Interpretation des Tetragrammaton: ‘Der Ewige’”, Part 2, *Judaica* 55:3 (Zürich: Stiftung für Kirche und Judentum, 1999) 137.

Alfred Adam observes the following: “From the sphere of the divine at the background of all being, demonstrations of power constantly penetrated this phenomenal world; in terms of their essence, they could only be understood as ‘word’ (dābār), since this concept meant both the efficacious word as well as the matter wrought”¹⁹⁹. The primordial demonstration of this process is found in the account of Genesis, where God creates by speaking words. Through the word, He literally “calls into being” all that is. This process is also intimated at in the seriousness attached to the speaking of a blessing or the uttering of a curse, both of which were believed to set into motion a real chain of events, or to the giving of a name which consequently determined the being and identity of the name-bearer²⁰⁰. In Hebrew, words seem to have creative potential. They appear to have the innate ability to constitute the matter or event which they signify. The terms of the grace formula should be understood as having a similar “originating” capacity: they do not only refer to past events, but have the potential to recapitulate those events and reconstitute it to the audience each time that the formula is recited within a cultic context. Conversely, the grace formula did not only serve as an evocation of past events, but also as an invocation of events still to happen. To the Hebrew, it thus had a retrospective as well as prospective character, encompassing the whole temporal horizon of past, present and future.

With reference to the words contained in the mercy motto, this section could now be concluded: apart from the divine Name (the connection of which to the grace formula will be discussed presently), the motto, when translated into English or other Western European languages, contains three abstract adjectives (“merciful”, “gracious” and “patient”) and two abstract nouns (“love” and “loyalty”). These terms each signify a reality, not only a potentiality, as has already been argued under section 2. They are the voiced and textual residue of Israel’s experience of God’s benevolence and beneficence, his goodwill and good deeds. In the grace formula, these “worded deeds” or “done words” find eminent rhetoric encapsulation.

2.4.2.2 *Character of the Hebrew sentence*

As an introduction to this section, some observations by Walter Brueggemann, who delivered a valuable contribution regarding the “dialogical and dialectical” nature of Old Testament speech, will be quoted:

¹⁹⁹ “Aus der Sphäre des Göttlichen, die hintergründig hinter allem Dasein steht, dringen beständig Machtwirkungen in die Welt der Erscheinungen ein; sie können ihrem Wesen nach nur als “Wort” (dābār) verstanden werden, da dieser Begriff sowohl das wirkende Wort als auch die gewirkte Sache bedeutete”, Adam, *Lerhbuch* 94.

²⁰⁰ For an exhaustive study about the conceptual connection between a biblical name and the matter/event from which it was derived, see Strus, Andrzej, S.D.B., “Nomen – Omen. La stylistique sonore des noms propres dans la Pentateuque” [Monograph], *Analecta Biblica* 80 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978) 1-254.

Israel's utterance about God is characteristically stated in full sentences, and the sentence is the unit of testimony that most reliably is taken as revelation...The full sentence of testimony, which characteristically becomes revelation in Israel, is organized around an active verb that bespeaks an action that is transformative, intrusive or inverting²⁰¹.

He subsequently elaborates his line of reasoning by stating the following:

How did Israel in the Old Testament speak about God? Our provisional answer is that Israel's rhetoric is ordered by strong, transformative verbs with Yahweh, the active agent, as subject, acting on a variety of direct objects, whose shape and destiny are completely in the hands of the subject of the verbs²⁰².

Some qualifications could be applied to his remarks. Firstly, it is indeed true that God is always the subject of the verb. For example, Friedemann Oettinger asks the rhetorical question "Could the essential message of the Old and New Testament be expressed without sentences in which God is the grammatical subject of words and deeds?"²⁰³. However, in the Hebrew, Brueggemann's "full sentence of testimony" does not always revolve around an active verb. It is only in translation that the verb sometimes evolves. For example, the grace formula, which certainly is a "sentence of testimony" in Brueggemann's terms, does not contain a verb. The refrain "For his love is forever" (*kî l'ôlām ḥasdô*), the most-often repeated testimony in the Old Testament²⁰⁴, likewise contains no verb, although a verb is implied in the phrase or intuited by the speaker and hearer ("is"/"lasts"/"manifests"/"appears" etc.). To the extent that a verb is always implied by the semantics of the sentence, Brueggemann's main assertion about the transformative significance of the (implied) verb and the sentence is not compromised; his assertion simply needs some qualification/clarification. Secondly, regarding his next statement quoted above, the formulation of syntax should be slightly adjusted: God is indeed the subject of the active verb (recorded or implied), but the "objects" of his activity, whose destiny are in his hands, are not "direct objectives" in terms of grammar and semantics, but indirect objectives. The beneficial works that God does, or the situation-changing interventions that He undertakes, are the direct object. To frame the argument in syntactical and semantical terminology: Brueggemann sees the sentence as a unit containing Subject – Active Verb – Direct Object (or Nominative – Verb – Accusative), whereas it really is a unit consisting of the

²⁰¹ Brueggemann, *Theology* 123; also see 145.

²⁰² Brueggemann, *Theology* 135.

²⁰³ "Läßt sich das Wesentliche der Botschaft Alten und Neuen Testaments aussprechen ohne Sätze, in denen Gott das grammatikalische Subjekt von Worten und Taten ist?", Friedemann Oettinger, *Gottesbild und Gottesdienst. Gedanken zur Gottesfrage in der Versammlung des Leibes Christi* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979) 30.

²⁰⁴ 43 times; see section 2.1, p. 27, fn. 89.

following: Subject – Transitive Verb – Indirect Object – Direct Object (or Nominative – Transitive Verb – Dative – Accusative). God is the subject of the verb or the Nominative, the wonderful work that He does is the Direct Object or Accusative, and the people to whom the benefits are “given” are the Indirect Object or “Dative”²⁰⁵.

Following the discussion of Brueggemann’s views, further aspects of Hebrew speech could now be taken under consideration. In a similar vein to Brueggemann’s, Wolfram Hermann points out that Israel “had a rich repertoire of nominal and verbal expressions at their disposal to...specify precisely what effects the divine activity had in their lives”²⁰⁶. Behind any sentence describing the benevolent attitude and the beneficent activity of God lies a history of incidents experienced by Israel as interventions of God, and worded by Israel into utterings of praise, thanksgiving and confession. The adjectival and nominal terms which are used to describe God and which are recited in the mercy motto are the condensation of this cataract of sentences and statements uttered by believers. It is a single sentence speaking volumes. Brueggemann’s remark with regard to the adjective “merciful” (*vrhm*) may serve as representative for all such epithets and statements: “In order to make this statement, Israel must have, I propose, many verbal sentences that narrate times and events in which Yahweh is seen to be concretely merciful”²⁰⁷. Here again, Brueggemann’s reasoning has to be emended or extended: as has already been pointed out under 2.4.2.2, the Hebrew sentence need not necessarily contain a verb; sentences in Hebrew may consist solely of nouns and/or adjectives²⁰⁸. The following summary will conclude this subsection: the importance of the sentence as the basic, constituent unit of speech was noted. It was recognized that, even in the absence of a verb, sentences of biblical witness or confession always denote a God who actively intervenes in the life of his people, and who is thus the subject of the active verb,

²⁰⁵ These are rather pedantic remarks, but if Brueggemann employs terms like “rhetoric”, “Israel’s theological grammar”, “the grammar of Israel’s faith” and “dialogical and dialectical”, then grammar and syntax become pertinent matters and should be adequately formulated.

²⁰⁶ “Ihnen stand ein reichhaltiges Repertoire an verbalen und nominalen Ausdrücken zur Verfügung, um...je die Auswirkungen göttlichen Agierens auf ihr Leben zu präzisieren”, Hermann, *Jahweh* 40. He neglects to include adjectival and adverbial expressions which possess the same “verbality.”

²⁰⁷ Brueggemann, *Theology* 209.

²⁰⁸ It seems as though Brueggemann possibly does not take into account that when verbs, adverbs, nouns or adjectives are cognates of the same root (for example *vrhm* or *vrhn*), they have the same signified field of reference. This might explain why, much like Franz, he upholds a kind of “conceptual separation” of noun and verb when he mentions the grace formula: he describes it very aptly as a “credo of adjectives”, but then declares that it is “a credo of adjectives about the character of Yahweh, very different in texture from the credo of verbs on which von Rad has focused our attention”; Brueggemann, *Theology* 216. In fact, the verbs attesting to God’s merciful activity have temporal as well as conceptual priority to the adjectives: it is as a consequent of his beneficence that Israel ascribes the adjectives “merciful”, “gracious” etc. to God. Further on the same page he seems to contradict himself when he correctly states the following: “For each of these adjectives, I suggest that Israel must have available for itself a rich variety of verbal sentences that support and give credence to the adjectival claims” [italics in the original].

implied or explicit, in the sentence. Other parts of speech, like nouns or adjectives that are incorporated into the sentence likewise denote a transitive function between God as giver, and his beneficiaries as receivers. The mercy formula is an outstanding exemplification of these “syntactical dynamics”: in a single sentence consisting of a few parts of speech, we find the rhetorical embodiment of many utterances about the divine disposition and deeds. Just as the lovingkindness (*hesed*) of God may be described as the *summa* of all the terms which describe the divine attributes of pathos, so the grace formula may be termed the *summa*, the summit, of all sentences which indicate the divine goodwill and good deeds.

2.4.2.3 *Character of the Hebrew recital*

In subsections 2.4.2.1 and 2.4.2.2, the affinity of the grace formula to the single word, as well as to the sentence as smallest semantic unit was explored. In this last subsection, the affinity of the grace formula to biblical narratives or recitals, which are a prolonging and collection of sentences about God’s wholesome works, will be taken under consideration. Any language suggests a particular “life and world view”, a certain understanding of reality which is reflected in its speech, its vocabulary, grammar, syntax and figures of speech²⁰⁹. This is what makes each language or linguistic family “idiomatic”, in the sense of exhibiting typical, unique and characteristic traits which serve to distinguish it from other linguistic families. It has already become apparent that one of the important idiomatic aspects of the Hebrew language is what was termed its “verbality”. This verbality accorded with the Hebrew experience of life and the world, and also found expression in Israel’s confessional recitals which related pivotal events in its history and which may be described as a conglomeration or aggregation of sentences about God: “As soon as the festival recital describing the exodus from Egypt, for example, strikes the hearer yet again during the reading, the simultaneous, present character of the contents of the text is established with the hearer. The absence of a real temporal indication corresponds to this conception of time...”²¹⁰. It was because of the Israelite’s experiencing language in this characteristic, “idiosyncratic” way that the recital of God’s great deeds of salvation assumed such importance in Israel’s life. This importance was pointed out especially by Gerhard von Rad and George Ernest Wright: it was the regular recital of the divine “saving acts” or “mighty deeds” which constituted Israel’s religious consciousness and identity. Von Rad saw in these recitals “...those ever-new attempts to make the divine acts of salvation

²⁰⁹ Adam, *Lehrbuch* 93, states that each language supposes a certain “Gesamtdenken, Weltdeutung und Gefühlsgehalt”, words that do not have handy English equivalents. “Gesamtdenken” denotes a total, comprehensive complex of thought, “Weltdeutung” a view or way of deriving meaning from this earthly reality (a “philosophy” of life), and “Gefühlsgehalt” refers to the nature and content of emotional and psychological attitudes.

²¹⁰ “Sobald das Wort, das z.B. den Auszug aus Ägypten beschreibt, den Hörer wiederum in der Festlesung trifft, ist die Gleichzeitigkeit des Textinhaltes mit dem Hörer hergestellt. Diesem Zeitbegriff entspricht das Fehlen einer echten Tempusbildung des Verbums...”, Adam, *Lehrbuch* 94.

relevant for every new age and day – this ever new reaching-out to and avowal of God's acts"²¹¹. It could therefore be stated that the recitals, also called "credal formulae", "credal statements", and "confessional formulae" by von Rad²¹², are to be understood as nothing less than an extension or elaboration of the verbal function embodied in Hebrew words and sentences and expressed in the recitals. It is the verballity of Hebrew speech that imbues the narratives with a reiterative and indicative mood and accords them their actuality and presence. "These highly studied recitals, situated in contexts of worship and instruction, narrate Israel's remembered 'historical' experience of the decisive ways in which Yahweh, the God of Israel, has intervened and acted in the life of Israel. Thus, at the outset von Rad understands Israel's theology as a *narrative rendering* of what has happened in Israel's path, a narrative that still has a decisive, defining power for subsequent generations"²¹³.

At this point, it is advisable to take a short *excursus*. Criticism and reservations were subsequently voiced against exponents of the Biblical Theology Movement such as Von Rad and George Ernest Wright. Brueggeman gives examples of such criticism²¹⁴: there is the contention that von Rad *cum suis* do not sufficiently take into account the relationship between salvation history and secular history, or between "theological claim" and "recoverable datum" (James L. Barr). Also raised are objections that using the model of historic recitals to account for an Old Testament theology places an undue emphasis on God's acts, or on the events that derive from these acts, and that the focus should rather be on the text itself as artefact, or better still, on the "canonical intentionality" of the text as it appears within a matrix of inter- and intratextual biblical referentials (Brevard Childs). Brueggemann also adds the reminder that Walther Eichrodt "castigated" von Rad for being existentialist, just as James Barr linked von Rad to Bultmann for the same reason, namely "his existentialist treatment of the historical"²¹⁵. An exhaustive discussion of this issue will exceed the limits of the present dissertation. A few provisional and cursory remarks will however be made: as to the perceived methodological problems flowing from the "ghastly wide divide"²¹⁶ between "salvation history" and secular history, some counter-observations could be tabled. The question is whether this conceptual divide between salvation and secular history does not only become operative if and when the "secular" discipline of history digs the ditch. Put another way: should theology, with themes like the concept of "salvation history" and its rhetoric encapsulation in formulas like the mercy motto and longer recitals, amongst other themes, be beholden to the exigencies and demands

²¹¹ Von Rad, G., *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1970) vi.

²¹² Von Rad, op.cit. v, vi, 121-122.

²¹³ Brueggemann, *Theology* 32.

²¹⁴ Brueggemann, op.cit. 43f.

²¹⁵ Brueggemann, *Theology* 48, fn. 141.

²¹⁶ "...garstiger breiter Graben", a phrase coined by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in 1777.

of a secular discipline? Theology in general, and Old and New Testament theology specifically, have their own, “in-house” categories and rules which need not be explained or justified *a priori* to outside disciplines such as history or the philosophy of language, just as these biblical disciplines do not have to submit to abstract, nominalist and Hellenic categories to structure or promulgate their thoughts. Perhaps it is not the brief of “core disciplines” like systematic theology or dogmatics to engage with secular disciplines from the outset, but rather a consequent, *a posteriori* assignment for the biblical discipline of apologetics. As for the opinion that the focus of Old Testament theology should be on the text and its intra- and intertextual matrix rather than on the divine deeds *per se*, the following comments could be made: it is incumbent on any Old Testament theologian to take the “canonic intentionality” of the text, in and through which God is deemed to speak or to let speak, and its wider biblical context seriously, but the text is after all secondary, a consequent of describing the prior saving events by which the text is subsequently constituted as relict or artefact. Without these happenings, there would be much less to embody in the guise of a text, formulaic sentence, or recital. However much the “text” has intertextual referentials within the “canon”, it should in the last instance always be related to the originating events. Lastly, as for the criticism that von Rad’s approach is existentialist, it should be admitted, but then noted as a matter of approval. Inasmuch as Israel experienced the situation-changing effects of God’s pathos in their lives and worded these experiences into shorter formulas of praise, thanksgiving and confession like the mercy motto, or into longer recitals, their experiences and the rhetoric into which these experiences of the divine intervening activity were incorporated are indeed existential, though not “existentialist”, if by the last term is meant a mere subjective treatment of their historical experiences. The concrete and historical events of salvation are the interface between the divine dimension and human existence. The subjective, existential experience of Israel was constituted by the objective reality of God’s bringing about a real change in their practical circumstances, by God’s mighty deeds and wonderful works. It would be hard to find a better term than “existential” to describe this experience of Israel. The grace formula has the potentiality to suspend and simultaneously resolve the tension between the opposite poles of “objective revelation” and “subjective/existentialist interpretation”; it could be said to serve as nexus. At the very least, it seems as though some affinity exists between the Biblical Theology Movement’s views about Israel’s narrative rendering of its history on the one hand, and certain aspects of the Hebrew language on the other hand. It is possible that these views could be usefully co-opted when the rhetoric of the Old Testament is the subject matter.

Theologians like Barr and Childs made a distinction between the concept of the divine activity and the concept of the text as the “cognitive residue”²¹⁷ derived from interpreting these activities, with the second having priority. This distinction was used to question some of the validity of Von Rad’s approach, but could possibly be obviated by taking into account one of the idiomatic aspects of Hebrew speech discussed above, namely the efficacy of the word, with the implication that a word has the inherent ability to (re)constitute the event or reality which it denotes, and that word and event are not to be understood as being separate. If the congruence of word and happening is taken as *datum*, the distinction between the divine activity and its rhetoric incorporation into a text likewise becomes blurred. It has to be admitted that in the distinction Barr and others made between the event and the text, event is conceived as preceding the text (first the event, then the text), whereas in the suggested resolution of this distinction, namely taking into account the unity of word and event, it is the word that has temporal priority (first the word, then the event). However, regardless of which has temporal priority in this “procedure”, the mutuality and reciprocity of the two dimensions have to be acknowledged. In the case of God’s beneficent intervention, this prior event constitutes the text, but, in turn, the hearing of the words of the text reconstitutes the event and makes it real and present yet again. In other cases the word might constitute the event; the mutuality is not compromised by the inversion of the procedure. It is interesting that the grace formula may be seen as a text which sometimes invokes a subsequent, future event, and sometimes evokes a preceding event, as has been commented on under point 4.2.1. When the grace formula is quoted in Psalm 86:15, it seems to be an invocation to a future beneficial act of God (the next verse reads “Turn to me and be gracious to me”). This also seems the case when the mercy motto is quoted in Joel 2:13 (the next verse reads “Perhaps He will turn back and relent and leave a blessing behind Him”). Elsewhere, the grace formula seems to be an evocation of a past beneficial act of God, like in Psalm 103. Perhaps it could thus be stated that the distinction made between *text* and *event* is at best a temporal distinction, and that from a conceptual point of view there exists a “simultaneous mutuality” in which the distinction between preceding event and subsequent text is erased. Likewise, the distinction between antecedent/originating *word* and consequent/eventual *text* also becomes tenuous: the original, antecedent word, with its creative potential and outcome, and the subsequent text, with its formulating of a wrought reality, both relate to the same event that has occurred: the first constitutes, the second reconstitutes, the divine operation in history. In the grace formula, a nexus of word, event and text may nevertheless be found.

²¹⁷ Brueggemann’s phrase; *Theology* 44.

To conclude this section: the role of narrative recitals in the life of Israel was briefly discussed. These narratives are an aggregation or conglomeration of sentences uttered in confession and praise of the divine saving deeds. When Israel participated in these narratives, the events were recapitulated in their consciousness and assumed a present, “indicative” character; the narrative and the event were experienced as simultaneous or synchronous. In the grace formula, we find a *précis* of these recitals, a succinct abbreviation in one sentence of these historic narratives which nevertheless preserves their gist, namely the acknowledgement and re-enactment of God’s great saving deeds in history. When the grace formula was discussed in subsection 2.4.2.2 as a sentence comprising a complete semantic unit, it was described as a lofty representative of many sentences spoken about the divine deeds. The term *summa* was used to indicate that the formula may be taken as the summit of all sentences bespeaking God’s acts of salvation. The same term could be employed to describe the grace formula with relation to Israel’s recitals. In this instance, the term indicates that it is the short *summary* of all these recitals.

2.4.2.4 Concluding remarks

The grace formula is the repository of individual words, namely adjectives and nouns that bear witness to a situation-changing divine activity, as was pointed out under 2.4.2.1. Embedded in the formula, these convolved parts of speech are in a state of mutual cross-referencing, each term casting meaning upon every other term, thus constituting a rhetorically-charged statement about the divine deeds. Under subsection 2.4.2.2, it was pointed out that the single sentence of the mercy motto is also an eminent representative of the many sentences of the Bible which attest to the divine activity; it may be stated that these numerous and varied utterances are subsumed and concentrated in the grace formula which is their constant Leitmotiv. Finally, under 2.4.2.3 it was argued that the mercy motto is a distillation of the lengthy narratives recited by Israel throughout its history. It is a shorthand version of the credal recitals. It could be described as the rhetorical residue of these recitals; many sentences condensed into a single statement. In conclusion, it could thus be stated that the grace formula is a convolution of terms, a concentration in a single sentence, and a condensation of extended recitals. It is a formula resonating with all the biblical statements about the transitive and transformative divine activity. It is a *ritornello* of God’s great deeds²¹⁸.

²¹⁸ There are other promising aspects about the rhetoric of the grace formula, such as its inter- and intratextuality within the biblical canon and midrashic tradition which will be co-opted in the next section. For example, Thomas B. Dozeman, in a discussion of the grace formula in Exodus 34:6, Joel 2:13 and Jonah 4:2, points out the “importance that inner-biblical midrash has played in the formation of the Hebrew Bible within the postexilic period”, as well as the relevance of related matters of rhetorical analysis, like the “anthological style”, a term coined by Renée Bloch; Dozeman, “Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Yahweh’s Gracious and

2.5 The grace formula: correspondence with the divine person

In the previous section, an attempt was made to illustrate the affinity of the grace formula, with its idiomatic rhetoric character, to the notion of the “divine deed dimension”. In the concluding section of this chapter, an effort will be made to demonstrate that the grace formula likewise shows a congeniality to our understanding of the divine *persona*, and thus exhibits the potentiality to serve as hermeneutical key to a fundamental subject within dogmatics, namely the doctrine of God. In Western theological thought, this theme has often been subjected to what could be termed “Greek” or “Hellenistic” categories of thought, as had been discussed in the first chapter. In distinction to Hebrew and midrashic efforts to come to an understanding of the divine person by employing terms descriptive of the divine deeds, Western doctrine about God found expression in idealistic and abstractionist terminology²¹⁹. “Aseic” denotations were introduced to describe how God is “in Himself”, for example “omnipotent”, “omnipresent” and “omniscient”, and apophatic terms to describe how He “is not”, for example “impassible”, “immutable” and “indivisible”. Such terms conveyed a notion of God as being a type of “passive hypostasis”, a static, unmoving and immovable entity, and they did not involve the divine deed dimension as expressed in the rhetoric of the Old Testament. It is in this regard that Walther Brueggemann states the following: “At the core of Israel’s theological grammar are sentences governed by strong verbs of transformation... This focus on sentences signifies that Israel is characteristically concerned with the action of God - the concrete, specific action of God- and not God’s character, nature, being, or attributes, except as those are evidenced in concrete actions”²²⁰. In Western tradition, the doctrine of God found expression in what could be called a type of “theontology”. This scholastic or “ontological” conception of the divine person is quite far removed from an “ergological” understanding of God, as was also repeatedly suggested in the earlier sections of this chapter: propositions about the divine person could really only be conclusions, derived from interpreting his activity and accomplishments²²¹. In the next section,

Compassionate Character”, JBL 108/2 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) 208. Also see Friedhelm Hartenstein, “Die Zumutung des barmherzigen Gottes. Die Theologie des Jonabuches im Licht der Urgeschichte Gen 1-11”, *Ex oriente Lux. Studien zur Theologie des Alten Testaments. Festschrift für Rüdiger Lux*, Angelika Berlejung & Raik Heckl, eds. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012) 435-455, and Christoph Dohmen, “Wenn Texte Texte verändern. Spuren der Kanonisierung der Tora vom Exodusbuch her”, *Die Tora als Kanon für Juden und Christen*, Erich Zenger, ed., HBS 10 (Freiburg: Herder, 1996) 35-60.

²¹⁹ It goes without saying that there are attempts at correcting this tendency in Western theology. As mentioned in chapter 1, subsection 1.6.2, p.14-15 and fn. 55, Oliver Davies calls his contribution on the theology of compassion “... a corrective, pragmatic reorientation of the classical Western metaphysical tradition in the light of early Jewish modes of theological and ‘metaphysical’ reasoning...”; Davies, *Compassion* xxi.

²²⁰ Brueggemann, *Theology* 145. Elsewhere he remarks that this type of concrete speech is a category “ill-matched” to the classic theological categories of conceiving God as “Being or Substance”, op.cit. 126.

²²¹ In this chapter, there are separate headings respectively addressing the divine deeds (section 2.4) and the divine person (section 2.5). This may seem as precisely the kind of “metaphysical”, analytic distinction which contradicts, rather than confirms, a more synthetic, “midrashic” approach as mooted above. However, the

a case will be presented that the grace motto may serve as corrective to an abstract, “metaphysical” conception of the divine person and be applied as formula to a biblical understanding of God.

2.5.1 *The grace formula and the divine names of Exodus 3:14,15*

“Counterpoint” is a term used in music to describe a compositional technique or procedure in which two or more melodies are in “interplay”: they are combined, but with each melody retaining its own identity and independence. In combination, however, each melody also unveils and releases hidden potentialities in the other melody or melodies, potentialities which would have remained dormant or “unsounded” if it had not been for this mutual contrapuntal interplay. The counterpart in theology to this technique in music is the procedure of inter- and intra-textual referencing, a process in which a text, or texts, contribute to an enriched understanding of another text. The intention is now to investigate whether the mercy motif, when placed in counterpoint with the divine names, has the ability to bring into play certain motifs about the divine person which may otherwise have remained silent or undisclosed.

2.5.1.1 [אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה] אֶהְיֶה, *’ehyeh [’asher ’ehyeh]*

In Exodus 3:14, we find the “paronomastic self-description of God”²²², the name revealed to Moses when he asked God “If I come to the Israelites and tell them that the God of their forefathers has sent me to them, and they ask me his name, what am I to say to them?” (Exodus 3:13). The name given in Hebrew is translated in English as “I am who I am”, or “I am that I am”, or “I am he who is”²²³, and is translated similarly in other languages referred to in this study, with the possible exception of the LXX, a translation which will presently receive some attention. The first observation to make is that this name-sentence is of a different idiom or “tenor” than that which is displayed in the syntax of the Hebrew sentence as discussed in the previous section. It contains an intransitive verb and therefore has no direct object²²⁴. In this respect, it does not seem to represent the rhetoric of the Old Testament as it found expression in transitive verbal sentences containing a direct and/or indirect object. Taken as it stands, this statement is susceptible of being accorded a metaphysical, “theontological”

separate sections must rather be seen as an acknowledgement that, insofar as an understanding of God derives from an understanding of his works, there are indeed two dimensions to be explored. Furthermore, it may be the only way to address the given fact that, to a greater or lesser degree, there does exist a kind of “dualism” between ontology and ergology in Western theological thought. The division into “divine deeds” and “divine person” is thus a methodological distinction, nothing less, and nothing more.

²²² Davies, *Compassion* xxi.

²²³ Respectively the NRSV and NAB (first option), the REB and the NJB. Other translations are “I will be what I will be” or “I will be who I will be”, e.g. John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003) 338.

²²⁴ The verb could be employed to govern an indirect object, or Dative: “I am/will be *for you*”; cf. a similar occurrence in Exodus 20:3 where God says *lo’ yiyeh-’elka* [*’elohim ’ahērim*], “There must not be for you (other gods)”, a case which will be referred to when discussing intertextual referentials.

interpretation in line with Hellenistic categories of thought. It is possible to see the LXX version as an articulation of this passive and “hypostasising” tendency: the expected translation would be ἐγώ εἰμι ὁς ἐγώ εἰμι, but the rendition is ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν, “I am the Being”, a version which makes of the concept of God something abstract, “ideational” and unrelational, not transitively involved in immanent matters. Taken as it stands, this statement of apparent passivity does not seem to echo the motif, or “movement”, of the grace formula which is an attestation of the divine, intervening activity. The provisional question now is whether the grace formula could be placed in counterpoint to the divine name to unveil meanings which otherwise would remain sealed or unvoiced. A further line of reasoning first has to be introduced. Following the observation with which this paragraph started, a second observation may now be made, namely that there are other sentences in the Old Testament that in terms of grammar and syntax display a structure similar to that of the statement *’ehyeh asher ’ehyeh*, and which suggest an undetermined, provisional or optative mood. Here are some initial examples²²⁵: *yithallēkū ba’asher yithallēkū* (1 Samuel 23:13 “They travelled wherever they travelled”, יִתְהַלְכוּ בְּאֲשֶׁר יִתְהַלְכוּ), *’ani hōlēk ’al ’asher-’ani hōlēk* (2 Samuel 15:20 “I will be going wherever I will be going”, הוֹלֵךְ אֲשֶׁר-אֲנִיעַל הוֹלֵךְ אֲנִי), and *gūriy ba’asher tagūriy*²²⁶ (2 Kings 8:1 “Stay [as stranger] wherever you will stay”, תִּגְדֹּרִי בְּאֲשֶׁר גִּדְרִי). Coming to the point: there are a few similar sentences which display the same grammatical and syntactical structure as that of the divine name and which offer promising intertextual possibilities. In Exodus 33:19 we find the following declaration uttered by God: *hannoti ’et-’asher ’ahon w’rihamti ’et-’asher ’ārahem*, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy” (אֶרְחָם אֶת-אֲשֶׁר חֲנֹנִתִּי אֶת-אֲשֶׁר וְרַחֲמֹתִי אֶחֱנֶה). Not only do we have here an anticipation of the dual concepts of mercy and grace found in the mercy motto of Exodus 34:6, but the double or two-fold repetition contained in the statement (grace mentioned twice, and then a repeat of the initial double phrase with “mercy” substituting “grace”) seems to be an allusion to the repeated *’ehyeh* of the divine name, explaining what the mysterious name denotes and giving content to the human effort at comprehending this numinous name. There is an additional counterpoint involved which further strengthens this supposition: with both displaying the rhetoric device of *formula idem per idem*²²⁸, Exodus 3:14 and 33:19 are not only in consonance with the dual concepts of mercy and grace voiced in the mercy motto of Exodus 34:6, but also with the

²²⁵ Examples given by Edmond Jacob, *Théologie de l’Ancien Testament*, 2. éd. (Neuchâtel: Éditions Delachaux et Niestlé, 1968) 40, and by Otto Kaiser, *Der Gott des Alten Testaments: Wesen und Wirken; Theologie des AT 2*, (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: Göttingen, 1998) 98-99.

²²⁶ Own transliterations from the Hebrew; Jacob’s transliterations are not always accurate or consistent. He cites other sentences which exhibit the same structure but do not employ the conjunction *’asher*, like Exodus 4:13 (*shēlach-na’ bēyad-tishlach*, “Send whomever you will send”) and Zachariah 10:8 (*rabû kēmo rabû*, “They will be as many as they were many”).

²²⁷ In some translations, the present tense is favoured (“I am gracious – I show/have mercy”).

²²⁸ This rhetoric device is pointed out by Kaiser, *Der Gott* 98.

reiteration of the divine name at the beginning of Exodus 34:6, “YHWH, YHWH”. The thematic unfolding of the meaning of the divine name of Exodus 3:14, *’ehyeh ’asher ’ehyeh*, becomes compelling. This contrapuntal interplay of motifs subsequently becomes a veritable *sumfonia*: to this three-part intertextual counterpoint (Exodus 3:14, 33:19 and 34:6), further voices could be added: only two verses before the divine self-revelation recorded in Exodus 3:14, God says to Moses *’ehyeh ’immāk*, a statement which, given the context, could imply either, or both, the future as well as the present tense: “I will be/am with you”²²⁹. The divine name, although assuming the same ambiguity (in tense, but additionally in meaning), at the same time conveys certainty through the promise given by God: “I will be with you”²³⁰. In this network of intertextual references, the grace motto becomes the exposition of the reality of the divine presence made palpable through his concrete deeds of mercy and grace. “Being-with”, being present, is a characteristic of this God: his presence is manifested in loving works; through his merciful and gracious interventions He “presents” Himself to the individual and the collective and is thus recognized as the LORD²³¹. With reference to Exodus 3:13 and 14 and the translation of the divine name as “The Eternal” by some Jewish scholars, Franz Rosenzweig asks what the point would be of reciting the mere fact of God’s eternal existence to those who are suffering and without hope, a question which Rivka Horvitz affirms positively when she replies that the translation of *’ehyeh* should rather convey the meaning that YHWH is always with them and will always show mercy to them²³². There is a strong tradition in Jewish and rabbinical thought, with representatives such as Rosenzweig, Solomon ben Isaak, Samson Raphael Hirsch, Benno Jacob and Martin Buber, that the divine name *’ehyeh* must be identified with the characteristic of mercy: “The notion ‘eternal’ leaves our hearts cold and contains nothing for our lives; as such it is without any relationship to *middath ha-rachamim*”²³³.

A last comment: a more distant, but still significant intertextual chord is struck in two prophetic passages: in Jeremiah 5:12, we read what the epitome of godlessness is: it is to make the

²²⁹ “The title or self-description ‘I am’ (Ex. 3:14) could sound to us like an abstract expression, and a profound one. God is the eternal, self-sufficient, all-sufficient one, not a god who comes into being or can die, like other Middle Eastern gods, but one who simply ‘is.’ That is no doubt true and may be implicit in the First Testament’s understanding of Yhwh, but it is not the immediate implication of the declaration *’ehyeh*, still less of *’ehyeh ’āšer ’ehyeh*. Indeed, the verb most likely means ‘I will be,’ for Yhwh has just used the same form in telling Moses ‘I will be with you,’ *’ehyeh ’immāk*”, Goldingay, *Theology* 336.

²³⁰ This assurance of the divine lovingkindness seeking the presence of its errant children is also voiced in Isaiah 65:1 (*hinnēni hinnēni*, “Here I am, here I am”) which with its double utterance is also an echo of Exodus 3:14.

²³¹ The meaning of the divine name YHWH will presently receive further attention.

²³² “Welchen Sinn hätte wohl für die verzagenden Unglücklichen eine Vorlesung über Gottes notwendige Existenz?” and “Er muss ihnen sagen, dass er mit ihnen ist, und damit ist gemeint, dass er jederzeit für sie da ist und ihnen gnädig sein wird”, Rivka Horvitz, “Moses Mendelssohns Interpretation des Tetragrammaton: ‘Der Ewige’”, Part 2, *Judaica* 55:3 (Zürich: Stiftung für Kirche und Judentum, 1999) 138.

²³³ Horvitz, art.cit., Part 1, *Judaica* 55:2 (Zürich, 1999) 17.

declaration *lo'-hû'*, "He [God] is not" (לֹא-הוּא). This statement is rendered as "He does not matter" in the REB, "Not he-" in the NAB, and "He is nothing" in the NJB. This is the ultimate denial of the divine name and the divine existence, nihilism in its paramount form. Apart from the overt connection, in negative form, to the statement "I am" of Exodus 3:14, there is a (negative) polarity with the grace formula, a formula which corroborates that God's being is made manifest in his doing, that his essence is transmuted into his agence and presence. The godless Israel and Judah declare that God "is not" because they believe that He "can not" (and vice versa); in the version of the NRSV, "He will do nothing". For them, "not-being" and "not-doing" are mutual and co-efficient: by denying that He can/will do something, they also deny his existence, contradicting the divine declaration "I am" with their counterclaim "He is not"/"He cannot". It is about these god-denying people that God has declared in Jeremiah 5:10 *lô' ʾyhw̄h hēm̄mah*, "For they are not to the LORD" (לֹא לַיהוָה, intransitive verb plus indirect object), meaning "They do not belong to the LORD", "They are not the LORD'S"²³⁴. However, even in their denial, they still unwittingly confirm the connection between the ergological and the ontological which is embodied in the grace formula: in their (non-)belief, they are only able to annihilate the reality of God's "being" and of his deeds by tacitly admitting this connection and using it to proclaim their unbelief by declaring that, as He does nothing, He is not. Finally, the same negative reality is expressed in Hosea 1:9 when the Lord declares *'anoki lo'-ehyeh l'ekem* "I am not to you" (again, intransitive verb plus indirect object), that is "I am not [God] for you", "I do not exist for you" (NJB). Again, it is the hermeneutic of the grace motto that enables us to give content to this emphatic divine declaration: in both instances, Hosea 1:9 and Jeremiah 5:10, God's non-presence will become manifest in non-events; through the absence of his wonderful works in their life, the godless will experience his non-availability. Their wishful thinking, *lo-hû'*, will have been fulfilled.

The concord between the grace formula and the divine name of Exodus 3:14 becomes even more harmonious and compelling when a final representative of this semantic construction is examined, namely God's words *'ādabbēr 'et 'asher 'ādabbēr* (אֲדַבֵּר אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲדַבֵּר, Ezechiel 12:25). It was already pointed out under heading 2.4.2.1 that *dābār* denotes both the efficacious word as well as the deed that consequently comes into effect. In the utterance by God, *'ādabbēr 'et 'asher 'ādabbēr*, one finds the merging of the two dimensions. It could be translated as "I say what I say" or "I do what I do", but also lends itself to be translated "I say what I do", or "I do what I say", or even by a kind of midrashic extension, "I say what I do and

²³⁴ Another fitting translation may be "They are nothing to YHWH."

I do what I say”²³⁵. It appears to be not only an allusion to the rhetorical structure of the divine name revealed in Exodus 3:14, but also an allusion to the grace formula of Exodus 34:6, firstly through its consonance with the repeated “YHWH, YHWH”, and secondly because it is a resonance of the concluding phrase of the grace formula, namely *hesed we’emet*: both statements bear witness to the utter trustworthiness of God and to the truthfulness of what He says. He is the same always. Whatever he says, He does. He never leaves undone what he has promised. Conversely, He never does what He does not promise, and He never promises what He does not accomplish. Therefore, Otto Kaiser interprets Exodus 3:14 as a declaration of who and how YHWH is: “I am the same at all times”²³⁶.

In conclusion: at the beginning of this section, the provisional question was tabled whether the grace formula, when placed in intertextual counterpoint with the divine name revealed in Exodus 3:14, may contribute to an enhanced understanding of this numinous name, unveiling some hidden meanings. In the light of the above discussion, one may conclude that the mercy formula could indeed serve as such a hermeneutical motif. Placed in counterpoint to this formula, the divine name resonates with tones of the divine presence as made manifest in the divine deeds. Kaiser very aptly has the following to say: “An abstract metaphysical statement regarding God as true Being, as the Septuagint had possibly already apprehended the formula, can however not be considered in this context. This would contradict Old Testament thought with its typical pre-philosophical character”²³⁷. Even if there remains a numinous, mysterious dimension to this name, indeterminacy is not the intended or the sole aim. Regarding a “mystifying” interpretation of this name, Jacob interposes that “...He [YHWH] rather wants to insist on the fact that He is truly such as He is and that He truly accomplishes what He says”²³⁸. Thus it is that Julian Obermann freely translates *’ehyeh ’asher ’ehyeh*, which he calls an “oracular formula”, as “I sustain – I am he who sustains”²³⁹.

2.5.1.2 YHWH

In the previous section, the divine name YHWH already received some attention with respect to intertextual references. Some supplemental intertextual matters about this name will now

²³⁵ The divine Name אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה is a palindrome. The fact that it could be read from either way offers interesting options to draw hermeneutical or midrashic analogies: one could state that the proposition “I say what I do” is also a kind of “figurative palindrome”, because it can likewise be read backwards to equally mean “I do what I say”, etc.

²³⁶ “Ich bin zu allen Zeiten derselbe”, Kaiser, *Der Gott* 100.

²³⁷ “Mit einer abstrakten metaphysischen Aussage über Gott als den wahrhaft Seienden, wie die Septuaginta die Formel möglicherweise bereits verstanden hat, ist in diesem Zusammenhang jedoch nicht zu rechnen. Das widerspräche dem alttestamentlichen, seiner Natur nach vorphilosophischen Denken”, Kaiser, *Der Gott* 99.

²³⁸ “...il veut bien plutôt insister sur le fait qu’il est vraiment tel qu’il est et qu’il accomplit vraiment ce qu’il dit”, Jacob, *Théologie* 40.

²³⁹ Obermann, Julian, “The Divine Name YHWH in the Light of Recent Discoveries”, JBL 68, J. Philip Hyatt, ed. (Philadelphia: JPS, 1949) 323.

be tabled. It was pointed out that the name *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh* (together with the short form *'ehyeh*) was given by God in answer to the question about his identity asked by Moses. However, this was not the only name given by God in answer. In the next verse, Exodus 3:15, the divine self-revelation is continued when God says "You are to tell the Israelites that it is the LORD [YHWH], the God of their forefathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who has sent you to them. This is my name for ever; this is my title in every generation" (REB). There is difference of opinion as to which name should be taken as the definitive answer to Moses' question: "I am"/"I am what I am", or *YHWH*²⁴⁰. However, this debate is not germane to the matter under present consideration: firstly, regardless of which name has precedence, both are and remain divine names, and both must be apprehended in counterpoint to the grace motto and to each other. Secondly, it may be possible to circumvent or resolve the debate about priority precisely by placing both names within an intratextual matrix in which they are in a state of equilibrium, each mutually paraphrasing and explicating the other²⁴¹. They are analogous to a binary system in astronomy, a term describing two celestial bodies which continuously orbit each other and are in a state of "active equilibrium".

Many explanations are on offer for the derivation of the name YHWH: some scholars are of the opinion that the name YHWH may be derived from the verb root *hayah* or *hawah*, meaning "to be", "to happen", "to become", a possibility which seems attractive in the light of the paronomastic similarity of sounds between the stems of the verb, the name YHWH, and the name *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*²⁴². Through the rhetorical device of paronomasia, an association between the name (YHWH) and a specific concept/matter (*hayah/hawah*) is invoked by incorporating the phonetics of the matter into the name given. Goldingay thus describes the name YHWH as the "reshaped form" of the verb *hawah*²⁴³. Franz Rosenzweig, following rabbi Samuel ben Meir, declares that God calls himself *'ehyeh*, "I am here" and we in turn call Him *yihye* ("He is here")²⁴⁴. Following Julius Wellhausen, other scholars find in \sqrt{hwh}/\sqrt{hyh} a causal, *hiphil* verb denoting "to cause to be", "to sustain"²⁴⁵, which would also be an appropriate meaning from a conceptual (and religion-historical) viewpoint. When considering these possibilities, some caveats should be stated: Obermann expresses reservations about the grammatical correctness of coupling the first person singular with a verb conjugated in the

²⁴⁰ See Kaiser, *Der Gott* 96-97 for representatives of each of the differing opinions.

²⁴¹ Regarding the debate about the priority of the names, I am tempted to give a Zen-like answer: "Which name has precedence: 'I am what I am', or 'YHWH'?" – Answer: "Yes".

²⁴² Cf. Edna Brocke, "Jüdische Umschreibung des Namens Gottes", *Gottes Name(n)*, Ilse Müllner, Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, Ruth Scoralick, eds., HBS 71 (Freiburg: Herder, 2012) 68; Kaiser, *Der Gott* 67, 74, 79, 99; Obermann, "YHWH" 320; Preuß, *Theologie* 161.

²⁴³ Goldingay, *Theology* 336.

²⁴⁴ Horvitz, "Tetragrammaton" 137-138.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Obermann, "YHWH" 320.

third person singular in a statement such as *'ani yhwh*, “I am the LORD”, a reservation which however presupposes that the third person singular is preserved in the name YHWH. In his turn, Jacob expresses reservations about Obermann’s hypothesis that *hawah* must be taken as causative *hiphil*: “...but – and here we have an important, if not decisive objection – up to the present, the existence of the verb *hayah* in the *hiphil* has not at all been attested”²⁴⁶. Whatever the case may be, there is no conjugation of the verb to which the name YHWH directly corresponds²⁴⁷. As the interest of the present discussion is in the significance of the divine name within its synchronic and intertextual setting, this short excursus about the etymology and philology of the name YHWH in diachronic perspective will be concluded with two quotations. Firstly, in the words of Adam: “The name [YHWH] did not originate in Israel, but was peculiar and linguistically inexplicable. Thus, even in the domain of speech, it expressed the full transcendence of the divine”²⁴⁸. Lastly, in the words of Kaiser: “All research into the original meaning of his name and over its provenance could eventually lead to no more than possibilities and probabilities”²⁴⁹.

Moving closer to a discussion of the intertextual network in which the name YHWH could be placed, mention must be made of the question whether the Tetragrammaton should be taken as a nominal or as a verbal form²⁵⁰. To the extent that it is taken as a proper name (in grammatical sense), it has a nominal guise. However, if the intertextual correspondence of the name YHWH with other textual markers is accounted for, there could hardly be any doubt that it is invested with a verbal sense, such as “exists”, “existing”. We find an interesting “negative confirmation” of this meaning in Exodus 20:2-3. In verse 2, God announces Himself with the words *'anoki yhwh ('elohêjka)*, “I am the LORD (your God)”. In verse 3, there follows the type of rhetoric device already noted above, when YHWH declares *lo' yiyêh-lêka ('êlohiym 'ahêriym)*, “There must *not* be for you (other gods)”. The device consists of the punning between *ywyh* and *(lo-)yiyêh* with a figurative contrasting of the “I exist” of YHWH and the “not-exist” with regard to alien gods. This is only possible because *yiyêh*, and thus *yhwh* (by rhetorical extension through punning), are apprehended as verbs²⁵¹. Following this, the dense counterpoint between the *per idem* formula of Exodus 3:14, the double *per idem* formula in Exodus 33:19, and the repeated exclamation of the name YHWH in Exodus 34:6 (matters

²⁴⁶ “...mais, et c’est là une objection importante sinon decisive, l’existence du verbe *hayah* au *hiphil* n’est jusqu’à présent attestée nulle part”, Jacob, *Théologie* 40.

²⁴⁷ Goldingay, *Theology* 336.

²⁴⁸ “Der Name stammte nicht aus Israel, sondern war fremdartig und sprachlich unerklärbar, drückte also auch auf dem sprachlichen Felde die volle Transzendenz des Göttlichen aus”, Adam, *Lehrbuch* 95.

²⁴⁹ “Alle Nachforschungen über die ursprüngliche Bedeutung seines Namens und seine Herkunft führen am Ende nicht über Möglichkeiten und Wahrscheinlichkeiten hinaus”, Kaiser, *Der Gott* 68.

²⁵⁰ Cf. von Rad, *Theology* 11.

²⁵¹ Also see some comments by Erik Aurelius, “Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott. Israel und sein Gott zwischen Katastrophe und Neuanfang”, *FAT 2:17* (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 339.

already considered above), will be briefly recapitulated and elaborated: firstly, it was contended that the two names given by God in answer to Moses in Exodus 3 remain in mutual counterpoint. Given that *'eyeh* and *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh* are verbally conceived, the divine self-revelation which is continued in the next verse with the name *yhwh* could hardly be nominalised. Secondly, this contention is reinforced when the correspondence between the Tetragrammaton and Exodus 34:6 is considered. The name YHWH of Exodus 3:15 is repeated in Exodus 34:6, directly preceding the grace formula, which may thus be understood as the “exegesis” of the meaning of this divine name²⁵². The intertextual concord with Exodus 33:19 lends further support to this reasoning: there is a “gravitational attraction” between the double *per idem* formula of God’s mercy and grace in Exodus 33:19, and the repeated YHWH, YHWH of Exodus 34:6, which are in their turn echoes of the “verbal” *per idem* name *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*. Since God’s mercy and grace denote activity and therefore verbality, the same applies to the character of his name. Kaiser applies the terms “verb form”, “verbal name” and “verbal sentence-name” to the the Tetragrammaton²⁵³. Thus it is the grace formula which gives content to the divine name YHWH, firstly by the double recapitulation of this name at the start of the formula, and then by the subsequent exposition of the name in the motto: “Merciful and gracious, patient and full of faithful love”. Through a contrapuntal interplay of texts, the grace motif discloses the hidden import of the the name YHWH: “Whereas the etymology of his name is obscure, Yahweh’s acts define his character clearly”²⁵⁴. Von Rad likewise acknowledges the concord between the divine name and the divine deeds of mercy: “Even the earliest avowals to Jahweh were historically determined, that is, they connect the name of God with some statement about an action in history”²⁵⁵ – and we know what these “acts” or “action” consists of by mediation of the mercy motto: they are his compassionate, gracious and ever-loving deeds.

The consonance between the name YHWH and the divine grace and mercy may be further explored. Gerhard Bodendorfer mentions that there has long been a tendency in the rabbinical tradition to ascribe the divine attribute of righteousness or justice to the name Elohim, and the divine attribute of mercy to the name YHWH²⁵⁶. Reinhard Neudecker surveys this tendency with reference to midrashic treatment of Exodus 20:2 “I am the LORD, your God” regarding which the question is asked: “Why does God introduce Himself twice, with two different

²⁵² The term “exegesis” is employed by Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus; Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press 1991) 301. Also see Timothy W. Grogan, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) 301 [both references happen to have the same page number].

²⁵³ “Verbform”, “Verbalname” and “Verbalsatzname”, Kaiser, *Der Gott* 79.

²⁵⁴ Highfield, *Great is the Lord* 159.

²⁵⁵ Von Rad, *Theology* 121.

²⁵⁶ Bodendorfer, Gerhard, “Die Spannung von Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit in der rabbinischen Auslegung mit Schwerpunkt auf der Psalmeninterpretation”, *SBS* 183 (2000) 161-164.

names?”. Answers given by early rabbinical midrashic commentaries are quoted: “Everywhere in Scripture where ‘LORD’ is written, God’s characteristic of mercy is meant; where ‘God’ is written, his characteristic of stern righteousness”²⁵⁷. In another early rabbinical source, the question is answered in the following way: “The Holy One, praised be He, said ‘When you do my will, I am “the LORD”; because I am called “The LORD, the LORD, a merciful and gracious God, ever-patient and full of love and faithfulness” (Ex 34,6)’. If however not, I am “your God” who punishes you”²⁵⁸. It is the credo of Exodus 34:6-7 which played a decisive role when the attribute of mercy was assigned to the name YHWH, as is especially clear from the rabbinic source quoted last²⁵⁹. We see that, once more, it is the mercy motto which emerges as the hermeneutical key to understanding the grace of God, and this regardless of whether grace and justice are respectively allocated different *domicilia*, or not. In fact, given the convoluted intertextual network involving the grace formula of Exodus 34:6 plus its addendum in verse 7 which is generally interpreted as an exposition of God’s righteousness and consistent meting out of justice, the conclusion must be drawn that the divine domains of mercy and righteousness are not distinct notions.

A last aspect of this polyphonic interplay of texts will be briefly highlighted: in Deutero-Isaiah, whom Edmond Jacob calls “the theologian of the name of YHWH”²⁶⁰, one repeatedly finds the expression *’ani yhwh*, translated as “I, the LORD...” or “I am the LORD”²⁶¹. Another repeated utterance containing the divine name is found in the same context, namely “(Thus) says the LORD”²⁶². At the opening of chapter 40, YHWH announces his intention to bring salvation to his people, to bring about a turnaround in their destiny. Interweaved with these announcements and with the proclamations of *’ani yhwh*, repeated mention is made of the beneficent deeds that God promises to do. Again, we may hear the grace formula being activated: in this formula we find an appropriate set of “collective nouns” for all the beneficent divine deeds which are promised. Even the words of Ezekiel 12:25, by midrashic extension understood as “I say what I do, and I do what I say”, find an echo in this context: for example, in Isaiah 48:3 YHWH declares “I revealed them with my own mouth; suddenly I acted and it came about”. The same reality is expressed in Isaiah 48:13 (“When I summoned them they came into being”) and 55:11 (“So it is with my word issuing from my mouth; it will not return to

²⁵⁷ MHG Dev [Midrash Haggadol, Devarim (Deuteronomy)] (ed. Solomon Fisch, Jerusalem: 1952, p.104), quoted in Neudecker, Reinhard, “‘Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott...’. Das erste Gebot des Dekalogs in rabbinischer Auslegung”, *Judaica* 52:3 (Basel: Stiftung für Kirche und Judentum, 1996) 186.

²⁵⁸ MekhSh [Mekhilta d’Rabbi Shim’on] (ed. Jacob Nahum Epstein & Ezra Zion Melamed, Jerusalem: 1955, p.146), quoted by Neudecker, art.cit. 185.

²⁵⁹ “Bei der Zuordnung des Attributs Barmherzigkeit zum Namen JHWH spielt Ex 34,6f. die ausschlaggebende Rolle...”, Bodendorfer, “Spannung” 161.

²⁶⁰ “...le théologien du nom de Yahweh”, Jacob, *Théologie* 42.

²⁶¹ Isaiah 41:4,13,17; 42:6,8; 43:3; 45:3,5,6,7,8,18,19,21.

²⁶² Isaiah 43:10,12,16; 44:2,6,24; 45:1,11,13,18.

me empty without accomplishing my purpose and succeeding in the task for which I sent it"). The divine declaration of the efficacy of his words expressed in Isaiah and Ezechiel is also tied twofold to the grace formula, firstly to the repeated declaration "YHWH, YHWH" at the opening of the grace motto via the *formula per idem* of Ezechiel 12:25, and secondly by relating the beneficial deeds of YHWH as promised in Deutero-Isaiah to the divine deed dimension alluded to in the items of the grace formula. A final contrapuntal voice is added when one considers the pericope in Isaiah 43:1-7. In verse 2, we hear the words "I shall be with you"/"I am with you" ('itt ^eka-'ani). This assurance evokes the divine name of Exodus 3:14, 'ehyeh or 'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh, a name which at the very least implies the manifest presence of YHWH, as was established under section 5.1.1. In verse 5, the promise "I am/shall be with you" is repeated. The two statements form an *inclusio* with at its centre the words "For I am the LORD your God" (Isaiah 43:3). There is a polyphonic interplay of voices illustrating and enhancing the meaning of the divine name YHWH: it is and remains a numinous name, but at the same time, it attests to a God who is active and actively present in the life of his people through the deeds that He first promises and then realizes.

In summary: von Rad defines the name YHWH simply as the "embodiment of the saving revelation"²⁶³. Regarding the correspondence between the grace formula and the name YHWH, one may say that, in the field of theology, there is a veritable *chorus scholarum* all attesting to this mutuality. Some such scholars will be given voice to secure the reasoning presented in this section. Gerhard Bodendorfer's view that the grace formula of Exodus 34 played a decisive role in assigning compassion to the divine name YHWH was already mentioned above. He thus concludes that it is mercy which is represented in the Tetragram and that the Tetragram indicates the priority of mercy within the person of God²⁶⁴. Timothy Willis submits that the name YHWH is not "merely an appellation", but, through the agency of the grace motto, becomes the indication of the divine character, "proclaimed to Moses centuries earlier (*Exod.34.6-7*)..."²⁶⁵. Preuss describes the grace formula as a concise compendium of the statements regarding YHWH's nature and being and concludes that this motto is a self-predication of YHWH²⁶⁶. Likewise, Christoph Dohmen calls the mercy motto

²⁶³ Von Rad, *Theology* 186.

²⁶⁴ "Die Barmherzigkeit repräsentiert sich im Tetragramm, im besonderen Gottesnamen..." and "Das Tetragramm zeigt den Vorrang der Barmherzigkeit in Gott selbst an...", Bodendorfer, "Spannung" 161 and 161-162.

²⁶⁵ Willis, Timothy, "'So Great is His Steadfast Love': A Rhetorical Analysis of Psalm 103", *Biblica* 72 (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991) 535, fn. 28 [italics added].

²⁶⁶ "Ein kleines Kompendium der...Aussagen über JHWHs Art und Wesen..." and "Selbstprädikation JHWHs", Preuss, *Theologie* 277 (the first citation partly quoted in footnote 165 above).

the “revelation of the name YHWH”²⁶⁷, while Markus Witte states that, in the grace motto, the nature and being of YHWH are described in a concentrated way²⁶⁸. The final quote will serve as *coda* to this section. An observation by Terence Fretheim was mentioned above, namely that the mercy motto is a “virtual exegesis” of the divine name given in answer to Moses²⁶⁹. He continues by calling the grace formula a “confessional statement” and concludes with the following words: “It cuts across the Old Testament as a statement of basic Israelite convictions regarding its God. It thus constitutes a kind of ‘canon’ of the kind of God Israel’s God is...”²⁷⁰.

2.5.1.3 Concluding remarks

In the above section, the grace formula was placed in an intertextual counterpoint with the divine names revealed in Exodus 3:14 and 15 and other motifs within the Old Testament which are in accord with these themes. It became clear that the names divulged by God to Moses were not mere appellations, but that they were invested with a wide spectrum of connotations, all of which witnessed to the dynamic, interventive work of God. The grace formula appeared to be the concise summary of all these benevolent intentions and beneficent interventions of God. Apprehended together, the divine names, the grace formula and the other consonant texts give forth a *sumfonia* of the grace of God, whose names are the embodiment of that grace.

2.5.2 The grace formula and the personhood of God

2.5.2.1 The relationship between the divine attributes and the divine person

The close relationship between the attributes and the actions of God received attention under various sections of this chapter, especially under point 2.4.1, but also intermittently under other sections and subsections. Some concluding remarks could however be offered to complement the above train of thought. In an article discussing the “literary affinities” of Exodus 34:6-7²⁷¹, Robert C. Dentan makes the following statement: “Particularly striking is the fact that the formula is a perfect example of ‘propositional’ theology, in which the character is [sic; sc.”of”] God is described in general terms, without either reference to His mighty works in history, to the Covenant, or to Israel as His elect people”²⁷². He even wonders what kind of worshipper

²⁶⁷ “Namensoffenbarung JHWHs”, Dohmen, Christoph, “Vom Sinai nach Galiläa. Psalm 103 als Brücke zwischen Juden und Christen”, *Das Drama der Barmherzigkeit Gottes*, SBS 183 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2000) 94.

²⁶⁸ “...wird in komprimierter Weise das Wesen Jahwes beschrieben”, Witte, “Barmherzigkeit” 180 (also see fn. 164).

²⁶⁹ Fretheim, *Exodus* 301 (also cf. footnote 251).

²⁷⁰ Fretheim, op.cit. 302.

²⁷¹ Robert Claude Dentan, “The literary affinities of Exodus xxxiv 6f.”, *Vetus Testamentum* (VT) 13 (Leiden: Brill, 1963) 34-51.

²⁷² Dentan, art.cit. 36.

would express their faith in such an “uncharacteristic fashion”²⁷³. When, in conclusion, he summarises the results of his study, he repeats his initial assertion: “...the passage stands out from its context and from most of the theological formularies of the OT [sic] by its ‘propositional’ nature. It is not kerygmatic, but descriptive; it is concerned not with God’s acts, but with his character”²⁷⁴. Dentan’s contention that the grace formula (which he quite fittingly calls an “Exodus credo” and to which he adds the addendum of verse 7) is a propositional statement void of reference to God’s deeds is, to say the least, baffling. Likewise, his concomitant conclusion that this credo is at the same time a credo untypical of Israel’s faith, is equally mystifying. Apart from the fact that such a conception, if pursued consistently, would also make short work of other credal and doxological mottos in the Old Testament, it is only possible to arrive at such a conclusion by consciously or unconsciously deciding *a priori* that there is no correspondence between the divine attributes and the divine activities. Dentan’s claim derives from two interdependent preconceptions: firstly, that God’s characteristics are something passive and abstract, denoting a mere attitude or intransitive disposition present in the divine being. Secondly, in this type of thinking, there is a conceptual barrier erected between the ontological and the ergological divine dimensions. Dentan seems to dismiss centuries of Christian and Jewish thought which promulgated the correspondence of divine disposition and deed²⁷⁵, and seems to ignore the association between God’s essence and his agency as well as the fact that it is not possible to arrive at propositional statements about God without mediation of the expository or functional dimension of the divine deeds. In fact, if these two preconceptions are upheld, arriving at the statements espoused by Dentan is logically inevitable: if there is indeed no correlation between God’s doing and his being, then any propositional statements about the divine person could only be arrived at by metaphysical, conceptual, theontological reasoning devoid of an ergological dimension. At the very least, such a process of thinking about God is alien to Hebrew, biblical perceptions. The issue reflected in Dentan’s thoughts becomes even more telling if one considers a work by Lothar Perlitt in which in a later chapter he includes some criticism against Dentan’s views²⁷⁶. The criticism is concerned with form- and tradition-historical aspects of Dentan’s article; even though Perlitt calls the grace formula a “confessional formula” (*Bekenntnisformel*) as well as an “invocation formula” (*Anrufungsformel*) or “epiclesis”, at the same time he agrees with

²⁷³ Dentan, art.cit. 37.

²⁷⁴ Dentan, art.cit. 48.

²⁷⁵ The comments by Gregory of Nyssa, one of the Cappadocian church fathers, on the grace formula found in Psalm 103:8 may serve as a random sample from the fourth century: “...he [God] receives his names from what are believed to be his works in regard to our life”; *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament VIII: Psalms 51-150*, Quentin T. Wesselschmidt, ed. (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007) 222.

²⁷⁶ “IV. Die Bundestheologie in der Sinaiperikope”, Lothar Perlitt, *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament*, WMANT 36 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969) 156-238.

Dentan's contention that the formula is a statement about God's character, and not his works²⁷⁷. The article and monograph are useful case studies to illustrate the tendency in Western theologies already discussed in chapter 1 and reiterated in this chapter, namely to perceive of the attributes of God in abstract, metaphysical or "Hellenising" terms, and consequently not to apprehend the correspondence between the divine transcendence and the divine immanence. One of the collateral results is that the grace formula again suffers a devaluation: if it is not the embodied speech of God's intervening work in history, but merely a statement about God *a se*, it becomes a dehydrated doctrinal proposition without actuality for the life of believers individually or collectively. If the divine attributes are hypostasised, thus imbuing them with isolational and not relational meaning, it follows that conceptually they remain enclosed in an endless, ever-recurring loop, constantly returning to themselves in a centripetal way²⁷⁸. It is in reaction to this scholastic type of thought in which the divine properties are sublimated into something "esoteric" (or "ontocentric", to use a term of Heschel's) that some theologians have sought to find terms that are more congenial to the verblat and actuality of Old Testament speech, as was discussed under section 2.4.2 above. With reference to terminology such as divine "attributes/perfections, properties, characteristics, appellations, virtues, names" Ron Highfield observes the following: "Many modern theologians refuse these terms, arguing that they depersonalize God by turning our attention away from the economy of salvation toward abstract qualities in an impersonal divine nature [...] Hence, they prefer narrative or dramatic ways of speaking of God"²⁷⁹. With this observation as impetus, we turn to the final section of this chapter.

2.5.2.2 *The personhood of God*

There has been an increased preference amongst Western theologians to move away from the traditional and "Greek" categories of thought employed within Old Testament theology and dogmatics and to seek a way of speaking about God and his works in terms more congenial to Old Testament language, a preference noted in the previous section. Even by usage of the term "category", these traditional categories reflected the Hellenistic heritage of thinking in analytic, deductive and abstract conceptions. Examples of this metaphysical and scholastic type of conceptualising were given: often, a proposed theology of the Old of the New Testaments was promulgated in terms of static nominalistic concepts like

²⁷⁷ "Richtig erkannt ist dagegen, daß die Formel nach ihrem Sitz im Leben allerdings nicht 'to His mighty works in history, to the covenant, or to Israel as His elect people' bezogen ist" and "...gewiß, 'it is concerned not with God's acts, but with his character' ...", Perlitt, op.cit. 214.

²⁷⁸ The analogy of a Möbius strip, a loop which has only one side and one edge, was already offered in chapter 1 subsection 1.6:3 as an illustration of this abstractionist inclination in Western theology regarding the characteristics of God.

²⁷⁹ Highfield, *Great is the Lord* 145.

“Covenant”/“Eschatological fulfilment” etc. or dogmatic thinking about God took place within an ontological matrix, making use of aseic and apophatic terminology to describe the divine attributes. The positive, corrective trend within Old and New Testament or Systematic theologies and dogmatics could amongst other things be described as an effort to align theological and dogmatical thought with Hebrew speech, approximating a midrashic way of thinking and speaking about the divine. It is an approach which opened renewed ways of understanding the divine person and the divine operation in history. However, besides the scholastic, theontological approach to Old Testament theology and dogmatics, of which the result often was a conception of a distant and depersonalized deity, there have been other developments in some branches of Western theology and New Testament theology which are detrimental to orthodox biblical doctrine about the divine person. These unorthodox or non-traditional developments could be grouped broadly in two domains. The first group are theologians whose point of departure is by and large still the biblical canon. The second group are theologians whose sources are to a greater or lesser extent extra-biblical. As it would be exceeding the parameters of this study, the following discussion will not attempt a detailed, in-depth evaluation and comparison of different representatives of these two schools of thought, but will be a sketch in broad strokes, for argument’s sake dealing in generalizations and not particulars. The focus will rather be an assessment of the grace formula with regard to these schools of thought.

In the second half of the previous century, some theologians strived to dispense of descriptions of God in personal terms. They deemed such terminology inadequate to describe the divine being, and not appealing to modern-day humans for whom such a notion of God may have appeared naive, outmoded or “pre-modern”. In their opinion, an innovative dogmatics of God should be conceived of in trans- or suprapersonal terms, moving beyond the traditional and moribund personalizing or anthropomorphic terms hitherto used. Some concepts formulated by Paul Tillich, who may serve as important and influential representative of this trend, will here be recapitulated. In Part II of his *Systematic Theology*, headed “Being and God”, he describes God as “the ground of being and meaning”. He continues: “Since God is the ground of being, he is the ground of the structure of being...He *is* this structure, and it is impossible to speak about him except in terms of this structure. God must be approached cognitively through the structural elements of being-itself. These elements make him a living God, a God who can be man’s concrete concern”²⁸⁰. The last sentence appears to be a logical *non sequitur*: it is difficult to conceptualise a personal, “living” God in terms of abstract nouns such as “ground” and “structure”, and consequently equally difficult to apprehend how man

²⁸⁰ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1 (Chicago: CUP, 1951) 238.

could have a “concrete concern” or “living” relationship with such an impersonal entity. It is hard not to find his reasoning contradictory: elsewhere he remarks that the “symbol ‘personal God’ is absolutely fundamental” (because man’s existential concern is with a person-to-person relation and not with “anything that is less than personal”), only to state in the next paragraph that “personal God” is a confusing symbol²⁸¹. These contradictions seem to be at least partly the manifestation of a type of Hegelian dialectic in his thought, an impression reinforced by his statement that God is “the eternal process in which separation is posited and is overcome by reunion”²⁸². Again, from a conceptual point of view, it is not very viable to personalize a “process” or to apprehend a living relationship with it. In short: the problem with the reasoning of Tillich *cum suis* is that, in their well-intentioned efforts to speak about God in above-personal terms, they end up speaking about Him in sub-personal terms. A last quotation from his dogmatics of God will do: “‘Personal God’ does not mean that God is a person. It means that God is the ground of everything personal and that he carries within himself the ontological power of personality. He is not a person, but he is not less than personal”²⁸³. Admittedly, when one is occupied with ultimate concerns like the existence and nature of God, it is inevitable that it will be a challenge to find adequate terms and formulations to articulate this reality as Tillich is trying to do. However, besides using terminology that has a depersonalizing connotation (“ground”, “ontological power”, “structure”), it would have been better if, instead of stating that God is not a person, but also not less than personal, he had rather formulated the concluding sentence as follows: “He is much more than a person, but He is nothing less”²⁸⁴.

The second group are theologians who base their ideas about God at least partly on extra-biblical sources. Such sources are diverse and heterogeneous and will simply be mentioned briefly. Gordon Kaufman, for example, finds his point of departure in a “non-religious” experience of this world, from which God eventually emerges as the “underlying reality”, “ultimate creativity”, “ultimate mystery” or “serendipitous creativity” permeating the universe²⁸⁵. He thus arrives at a type of speech about God which is similar to that of Tillich’s, although his *modus operandi* is different. Another development was Process Theology, with exponents such as Charles Hartshorne, John B. Cobb Jr. and W. Norman Pittenger. In an article published in 1969, Pittenger averred that “God is the chief, though not the only, causal

²⁸¹ Op.cit. 244-5.

²⁸² Op.cit. 242.

²⁸³ Tillich *Theology* 245.

²⁸⁴ A similar line of argument leading to the same result is followed by Reinhold Bernhardt when, on the one hand, he states that God is an “überpersonale Person”, but on the other hand calls Him a “spiritual power-field” (*geistiges Kraftfeld*) and claims that this “creative reality” (*schöpferische Wirklichkeit*) cannot be understood by means of the concept “person”; “Ist Gott eine Person?”, *Gott und Götter*, Ulrich H.J. Körtner, ed. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2005) 97-99.

²⁸⁵ Highfield, *Great is the Lord* 51, 52.

principle and He is also the 'supreme affect', participant in what goes on in the world and profoundly influenced by that going on"²⁸⁶. A later representative of this trend, John B. Cobb Jr., describes God as "a very special kind of energy event" and also uses the term "God-event" for the deity²⁸⁷. This deity is in some respects also a derivative being, determined by its interactions with the cosmos: "...the world in turn contributes novelty and richness to the divine experience"²⁸⁸. Peter C. Hodgson, in works such as *Liberal Theology: A Radical Vision*, promulgates a holistic, "cosmotheandric vision" in which universe (*kosmos*), godhead (*theos*) and "man" (*anēr*) exist in a state of reciprocity, mutually constituting each other, although the divine being's synergy with this whole is not exhaustive of his being²⁸⁹. God is also not the wholly other, but the whole of wholes²⁹⁰. This type of reasoning in which the divinity is seen as being "in process" may in part be explained as a reaction to static, rigid dogmatic concepts of God, like "immutability" and "immovability" - precisely the type of hypostasizing and apophatic thinking which was often evident in traditional Western theology. The two schools of thought thus share a kinship, however uneasy it may be. However, even while taking into account that these modern, or modernist, developments in theological thought are partly an apologetic effort at mediating between the religious and the secular and between "binaries" such as transcendence-immanence or determinacy-indeterminacy, it has to be observed that these essays in search of a trans-personal terminology for God seem to have the same end result, namely a depersonalising of God, regardless of whether the point of departure was biblical or not. The new vessels of terminology that are devised to denote the divine *persona* are shipwrecked on the rocky shore of impersonality or sub-personality ("causal principle", "supreme affect", "energy event").

In response to the theological notions arrived at by both abovementioned camps, Armin Kreiner's reasoning could be posited: under the heading "Gott als Person", he states that if and when there is debate about the existence or nature of a divine being, the only candidate that could seriously be considered must be that kind of reality which could be described as "person"²⁹¹. One could say that opinions such as those mentioned above will, if consistently followed through, not only lead to a devaluation of God, but to a decommission of God. Either God is in some analogical way a person (even if at the same time being much more than a

²⁸⁶ "The Attributes of God in the Light of Process-Thought", *Expository Times*, Vol.81:1 (1 October 1969) 21.

²⁸⁷ John B. Cobb Jr., *God in the World* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969) 71f.

²⁸⁸ Cobb, op.cit. 79.

²⁸⁹ Paul Dafydd Jones, "Liberal Theology: A Radical Vision" [Book review], *Journal of the American Academic Journal of Religion*, vol. 76:1 (Oxford: OUP, 2008) 213-216.

²⁹⁰ Gary Dorrien, "Liberal Theology: A Radical Vision" [Book review], *Journal of Religion* 88:4 (Chicago: UCP, 2008) 541-542.

²⁹¹ "...einiges [spricht] dafür, dass der einzige ernsthaft in Frage kommende Kandidat diejenige Wirklichkeit ist, die man als 'Person' bezeichnet", Armin Kreiner, *Das wahre Antlitz Gottes: oder was wir meinen, wenn wir Gott sagen* (Freiburg: Herder, 2006) 241.

person), or there is no real God. Any deity which is denoted in sub-personal terms is still-born. The notion of a deity as “ground of all being”, “ultimate power”, “energy event” or “serendipitous creativity” cannot be logically entertained while at the same time entertaining the notion of a God who shows compassion, patience and enduring love. “Power” or “energy” or “creativity” is not a state or condition that is able to experience itself subjectively. It is further unable to demonstrate any subjective feeling to another party. It has no transitive, centrifugal orientation. It may be conceptually possible to maintain these terms if compassion, forbearance and lovingkindness (terms incorporated in the grace motto) were perceived of as mere intransitive “states” or “conditions” – a perception according to which the statement “God is love” could readily be inverted to the statement “Love is God” – but as soon as these attributes are invested with a transitive orientation, signifying active divine interventions to the benefit of humans, the notion of a passive divine disposition has to be jettisoned. The grace formula is the key to witnessing that the divine attributes of mercy and love are not abstract conditions, but are invested with this transitive dimension, that God is the Subject of this interventive work, and that human beings are the recipients of this beneficent activity. The mercy motto precludes any understanding of God as merely a type of *hupostasis*. If cognisance is not given to the message of the grace formula as a kind of corrective, any conception of God would become reductionist, demoting Him to some kind of impersonal power: “Independent and separated from any connotations of personhood, one might still conceive of a reality which justifies genuine religious interest, but of nothing which deserves the description ‘God’”²⁹². The grace formula appears as a crisis-border. It seems as if no theology or dogmatics could have a neutral or ambivalent attitude towards the kind of reality expressed in this motto. Either the grace formula is embraced as a hermeneutical pathway towards theologising about God, or theological speech becomes theontological or theosophic speech about a depersonalized deity. It does not seem as though any representatives from the two domains surveyed above have found an adequate terminology which encompasses both the dimension of personhood embodied in the grace formula, as well as a notion of a divinity which is trans-personal – all efforts to word the trans-personality of God seem thus far to have stranded in sub-personal terminology redolent of a type of ontological or theontological attitude, not unlike Greek, idealising terminology. A successful conceptual synthesis is yet to be achieved. Until then, it is a case of either-or: either of maintaining the personhood of God to the degree that it is incorporated in the mercy motto or abandoning traditional Judaism and Christianity. “If no personal being exists...then, in my opinion, it would not follow that God could possibly be thought of in another way. To me, it would rather follow that nothing exists which deserves to

²⁹² “Unabhängig und losgelöst von den personalen Konnotationen wäre durchaus eine Wirklichkeit denkbar, die ein genuin religiöses Interesse rechtfertigt, aber eben nichts, das die Bezeichnung ‘Gott’ verdient”, Kreiner, *Das wahre Antlitz Gottes* 254.

be called God”²⁹³. The mercy motto is either the stumbling block to, or the keystone of, any attempt to speak about God.

2.5.2.3 Concluding remarks

In the final portion of this chapter, the divine personhood and the conceptual relation between the divine personhood and the divine attributes received attention. One of the issues mentioned was that some modern theologians saw the notion of divine attributes as too static, detracting from dynamic speech about God. The grace motto could be offered as a synthesising solution, as it is the nexus of the attributive and the narrative: mercy, grace, patience and true love are not only attributes of God’s person but also narratives of God’s activity, as is evident from the immediate context in which the grace motto is embedded. We have already seen that Heschel’s term “pathos” is nothing other than the collective noun for all God’s attributes of love and mercy, as eminently worded in the grace formula. He describes the nexus of divine disposition and deed as follows: “In sum, the divine pathos is the unity of the eternal and the temporal, of meaning and mystery, of the metaphysical and the historical. It is the real basis of the relation between God and man...”²⁹⁴. Perhaps a useful way of concluding the discussion would be to apply the French verbs *savoir* and *connaître* as tool to distinguish between personal and non-personal ways of speaking about God. Simply put, *savoir* denotes an intellectual, cerebral knowledge, whereas *connaître* denotes what could be termed “embodied knowledge/understanding”. Knowing an academic theory, or how to do mathematics, involves *savoir*, but knowing a person requires *connaître*. The test for any theologising about God is the following: given the ensuing terminology, would the divine persona thus described be more readily apprehended as an object of *savoir*, or as an object of *connaître*? It has to be said that both the traditionalist ontological as well as the modernist “cosmotheandric” or other theontological efforts to find an adequate speech about God seem to have ended in an impersonal, abstract kind of terminology, and that logic compels one to see this kind of theologising as being the object of *savoir*. *Connaître* is only an appropriate and applicable term if its “object” has some kind of personal dimension, as in the case of the personal God described in the mercy motto. This is in all probability what Heschel had in mind when he stated that the phrase “understanding God” is preferable to the phrase “knowledge of God”, as the second is too “speculative” and abstract²⁹⁵. Biblical theology should be theist, with God being understood in some analogous way as nothing less than a person, the object of *connaître*. This is where the grace formula finds its *locus*. If the deity is apprehended through *savoir*, this entity has no “personality” and its *domicilium* is deism or “deology”. It is through

²⁹³ Kreiner, op.cit. 254.

²⁹⁴ Heschel, *Prophets II* 11.

²⁹⁵ Heschel, op.cit. 2.

the attributes listed especially in the grace formula that God “impersonates” Himself. In a chapter headed “The Message of Yahweh as Personal God”, Alfons Deissler maintains that the Old Testament has “once and for all witnessed and proclaimed the correct understanding of the personality of God” and that, in order to stay true to biblical revelation, the Selfhood of God as “He” [“She”], “I” and “You” should always be upheld²⁹⁶. From this reasoning it follows that the grace formula could also be termed the synapse between the divine “He/I/You” dimension and the human “I/we” dimension which are in a dialogical relation *au* Buber, as the divine deeds suggested in the grace formula are the connecting field between God and human. When Deissler continues by saying that the person-being of God is attested by “deed-evidence” (*Tatzeugnisse*), he has coined a felicitous term for this synapse which is manifested in a concurrence of God’s attributes in and through practical works on the one side, and humans as the recipients of this initiative on the other side for whom these works are proof of a God who is personally involved in their destiny²⁹⁷.

To conclude: in the above paragraph, a delineation was posited between theism or a theology that has the notion of *connaître Dieu* as its matrix, and deism or “deology” which is operational within a conceptual framework of *savoir une divinité*. In an article on faith and belief, H.H. Price postulates that theism is the metaphysics of love²⁹⁸. If this postulate is true, then from a notional point of view there is hardly room for a terminology denoting God as “ground”, “power”, “force” “energy-event” and suchlike, as none of these or similar terms are conducive to associations with concepts such as love, care and compassion, all of which have a transitive orientation directed to a recipient. Planted in the semantic fields of these terms, any denotations such as lovingkindness and grace will wither and die. If Price’s axiom is true, then at least two conclusions could be drawn from it: firstly, any theology or dogmatics which is phrased in sub-personal or even non-personal terms about God, is not susceptible to the connotation of divine pathos, and could therefore not be termed a metaphysics of divine love, whatever else it may be. Secondly, the grace formula may be taken as the vindication of Price’s postulate, attesting to God’s involvement on “personal” level on the human stage, as has been claimed repeatedly in the course of this chapter. Lastly: besides applying the duality *savoir-connaître* to the issue of God’s personhood or not, another way to distinguish conceptually between personal and impersonal theologising about God would be to employ

²⁹⁶ “...das AT [sic] [hat] ein für allemal die recht verstandene Personalität Gottes...bezeugt und verkündet”, and “Eines jedoch darf im Raum der Treue zur biblischen Offenbarung nie entschwinden: das SELBST Gottes als ER und ICH und DU”, Alfons Deissler, *Die Grundbotschaft des Alten Testaments* (Freiburg: Herder, 1995) 190.

²⁹⁷ Deissler, *Grundbotschaft* 191.

²⁹⁸ “If theism is the metaphysics of love, it is not very surprising that love should come first in the epistemology of faith as elsewhere”; Henry Habberley Price, “Faith and Belief”, *Faith and the Philosophers*, John Hick, ed. (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1964; reprinted Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011) 25.

the German nomers *Seiende* (“being” in an abstract, ontological sense) and *Daseiende* (“being-there” in a concrete, ergological sense). As mentioned earlier, Franz Rosenzweig asked the question what sense it has to relate the mere ontological fact of God’s evident existence to those who are despairing and unhappy, to which Rivka Horvitz commented that God must tell them that He is with them, by which is meant that He will always be there for them and be merciful to them²⁹⁹. Against this background, Franz Rosenzweig employs the *Sein-Dasein* duality to attest to the God who is personally involved in the lot of humans: “God names Himself not the Being, but the Being-there, the Being-there for you, being at your side, present with you, near at hand or at least coming to you and helping you...only thus is He according to our reflections then also the Always-Being, the Absolute, the Eternal, apart from my need and my viewpoint...”³⁰⁰.

2.6 The grace formula: Eminent hermeneutical key to Biblical theology and dogmatics

We have come to the end of the discussion of the grace formula as it appears within the Old Testament. The rationale behind the chapter was to research the potentiality of the grace formula to serve as a possible hermeneutical key to formulating a theology of the Old Testament, as well as a doctrine of God. This also has a direct application to any theology of the New Testament as well as a *gesamtbiblische* theology, as any “whole-Bible” doctrine of God has as its point of departure the God revealed in the Old Testament³⁰¹. It became evident that, as a frame serves to bracket a picture, rendering it the focus of attention, the grace motto is bracketed by contextual references to the divine deeds, so that it likewise acquires a central position within the narrative of God’s interventive activity in human existence. It further became evident that the mercy motto is the encapsulation of what was termed an “ergological rhetoric”, consonant with biblical speech which, as it appears in the guise of words, sentences and narratives, most often evince verblivity or activity. These matters made it clear that there exist

²⁹⁹ See subsection 2.5.1.1 and fn. 231.

³⁰⁰ “Gott nennt sich nicht den Seienden, sondern den Daseienden, den dir Daseienden, dir zur Stelle Seienden, dir Gegenwärtigen, bei dir Anwesenden oder vielmehr zu die [sic; sc. dir] Kommenden, dir Helfenden...nur deshalb ist er dann unserem Nachdenken nach freilich auch der Immerseiende, der Absolute, der Ewige, losgelöst dann von meiner Bedürftigkeit und meinem Augenblick...”, letter to Martin Goldner, quoted in Rivka Horvitz, “Tetragrammaton” Part 1, p.9.

³⁰¹ It goes without saying that many scholars are of the opinion that no single concept or theme could be elevated to the status of representing a complete OT, NT and/or Biblical Theology, as it would be “reductionist”. In the present study, the validity of formulating a “Mitte” or central theme for such theologies is left open: the author simply engages with the ongoing efforts by many scholars who are indeed endeavouring to find such a unifying theme. The study is an effort to show that, if a central theme is indeed sought, the mercy motto may qualify as a possibility. Another qualification or delineation must be reiterated: the topic of this study is not the general concepts of grace and mercy, but the mercy motto as a specific formulation of these concepts. Pericopes in which individual terms designating “grace/mercy” are employed, such Gen. 6:8, or where such terms are implied as an underlying theme (e.g. the Book of Roth, Hosea) fall beyond the scope of the study.

an affinity and correlation between the rhetoric of the grace motto and the dimension of divine deeds as worded in Hebrew speech. Additionally, it became clear that such an affinity and correspondence also existed between the mercy motto and biblical speech about the divine person: when put in intertextual counterpoint with the grace formula, the divine names and the divine attributes become an attestation of the personhood of God. Mathias Franz, in the concluding sentence of his monograph on the mercy motto of Exodus 34:6-7, asserts that in the characteristics of grace, love and mercy which are embodied in the grace formula, the *proprium* of the knowledge of God - and by implication the *proprium* of any Old and/or New Testament dogmatics about God - is found³⁰². The value of thus reckoning with the grace motto when attempts are made to promulgate a doctrine of God becomes explicit. The mercy motto is the rhetoric *domicilium* of a God who is nothing less than personal and who consciously decides to participate in human history in beneficial ways, unlike any impersonal entity which does not have the capacity to will, let alone accomplish, anything. In the words of Alfons Deissler, this God is a God of “decisive involvement” in the affairs of humans³⁰³. Therefore the mercy motto has a critical function (in the original sense of the word) in assessing the validity of any doctrine about the deity, as it does not allow of a language about God which is expressed in terms that are either intransitive/non-intervening, implying divine passivity, or in terms that are depersonalising, suggesting a mere divine “entity” (which is in effect the same as a divine nonentity).

The last aspect to be recapitulated is the viability and relevance of the grace formula if and when one attempts to promulgate Old Testament, New Testament or Systematic theologies. There have been many individual voices in the domain of Biblical theology expressing appreciation of this formula. Bernard Anderson calls it an “ancient confession of faith”³⁰⁴, an assessment shared by Christoph Dohmen when he calls it a “credo formula resulting from theological thought and reflection”³⁰⁵ as well as by Terence Fretheim when he typifies the motto as a “confessional statement” and “a virtual exegesis of this name [YHWH]”³⁰⁶. Walter Kasper is even more specific and emphatic: “It became, so to speak, the credo of the Old Testament”³⁰⁷. In a similar approving fashion, Walther Brueggemann affirms that “[s]cholars believe this is an exceedingly important, stylized, quite self-conscious characterization of Yahweh, a formulation so studied that it may be reckoned to be something of a classic,

³⁰² “In der Gnade, Güte und Barmherzigkeit ist jedoch Gottes Wesen, das *opus dei proprium*, zu finden”, Franz, *Der barmherzige Gott* 270.

³⁰³ “Gott der entschiedenen Zuwendung” and “die göttliche Zuwendung und Entschiedenheit [original in Genitive] für Welt und Mensch...”, Deissler, *Grundbotschaft* 189, 190.

³⁰⁴ Anderson, *Theology* 59.

³⁰⁵ “...eine theologisch reflektierte Credo-Formulierung”, Dohmen, *Exodus* 354.

³⁰⁶ Fretheim, *Exodus* 302, 301 (already partly quoted under subsection 2.5.1.2, fn.251).

³⁰⁷ Kasper, *Mercy* 49.

normative statement to which Israel regularly returned, meriting the label ‘credo’³⁰⁸. In chapter 1, the ongoing search for a “Mitte” or central message of the Old Testament was discussed. Although they have up to the present not been coordinated adequately, there seem to be more and more voices suggesting that the mercy motto may be a possible hermeneutical key to a theology of the Old Testament³⁰⁹. Referring to the words of the motto in Exodus 34:6f., Robert Dentan states that they “not only occupy a climactic position in Israel’s final conception of the crucial event in her history [the Exodus], but provide the inspiration for two of the finest and most attractive passages in her later literature: Psalm ciii and the Book of Jonah”³¹⁰. He expresses approval of the “calm, rational and generous spirit manifest...in the orthodox Wisdom literature, and particularly in Exod. xxxiv 6f, Ps. ciii, and Jonah” (three of the texts in which the grace formula is embedded) and finds this motto very congenial to the modern mind³¹¹. The approving voices continue: Fretheim is of the opinion that the grace formula “cuts across the Old Testament as a statement of basic Israelite convictions regarding its God”, and “thus constitutes a kind of ‘canon’ of the kind of God Israel’s God is...”³¹². Dohmen calls the mercy motto a “theological paradigm” which serves as matrix for all intertextual references to God’s mercy³¹³. In a discussion of Psalm 145:8-13, a pericope in which the mercy formula occupies the central position, Rolf Rendtdorff observes that these verses “contain the fundamental statements of the biblical gospel in a concentrated form”³¹⁴. Although it was mentioned earlier that Preuss is sceptical of the suitability or applicability of the grace formula when searching for a “centre” of the Old Testament, he implicitly endorses this formula when he observes that any centre of the Old Testament must be found not in a “fundamental idea” or concept, but in speech about the “fundamental activity” of God³¹⁵. Given the truth of his observation (and that of the other authors quoted here), it would be difficult to find any utterance in the Old Testament better suited than the grace motto to express this reality of the divine constitutive activity. If frequency of statements played a role, then the word-pair *hesed w’emet* might meet Preuss’s requirement – but this word-pair is already incorporated in the mercy motto. The same applies to the ritornello *kî l’ôlam hasdô*: it is but a rephrasing of the

³⁰⁸ Brueggemann, *Theology* 216.

³⁰⁹ It may be mentioned in advance that the potentiality of the mercy motto as a hermeneutical key for a theology of the New Testament will receive further attention in later chapters.

³¹⁰ Dentan, “Exodus xxxiv 6f.” 50.

³¹¹ Dentan, art.cit. 51. It should be mentioned that he finds the source of the mercy formula (which he discusses in its intertextuality between Exodus 34:6f., Jonah 4:2 and Joel 2:13) in the Wisdom literature, a view which has not received much subsequent support.

³¹² Fretheim, *Exodus* 301.

³¹³ “...daß hier [in Exodus 34:6] ein theologisches Paradigma entsteht, auf das immer wieder (intertextuell) über die Gnadenformel zurückgegriffen kann”, Dohmen, *Texte* 55.

³¹⁴ “Sie enthalten in konzentrierter Form die grundlegenden Aussagen des biblischen Evangeliums”, Rendtdorff, “Barmherzigkeit” 145.

³¹⁵ “Folglich muß die zu suchende Mitte des AT [sic] von seinem Handeln sprechen, nicht aber einen Grundgedanken, einen Begriff als zentral herausstellen, sondern eher ein Grundhandeln”, Preuß, *Theologie* 28.

word-pair “constant love” with which the grace formula ends. For a central theme of the Old Testament, Preuss himself opts for the covenant formula (*Bundesformel*) also advocated by Walther Eichrodt and others, “I will be your God and you will be my people”³¹⁶. This formula has merits (frequency³¹⁷, long tradition history), but has met with reservations about its suitability to serve as a unifying theme, for example because “covenant” is a “nominalistic concept”, not verbally conceived, and because this option does not account for bodies of Scripture like the Wisdom literature³¹⁸.

On the other hand, there have been scholars who have expressed scepticism about the feasibility of attempting to formulate a unifying, encompassing theme for a theology of the Old Testament. For example, Wolfram Hermann expresses doubt whether it is at all possible to devise what could be termed a “Gesamttheologie” of the Old Testament because of the diversity and disparity of its contents, and declares that the search for a centre of the Hebrew Bible is an ongoing problem³¹⁹. He nevertheless proceeds to attempt just this, describing his approach as an effort to word the confrontation or interaction (*Auseinandersetzung*) between human beings and God. In his view, Israel’s faith was constituted by their continuous efforts to interpret their experiences of God’s intervening activity in their lives. In these efforts to express what they experienced, the concepts $\sqrt{h}sd$ and $\sqrt{j}š$ are the most favoured terms to describe the beneficial activity of God in their lives³²⁰. With these proposals of Herrmann, we are slowly approaching the grace formula as a candidate for voicing a unifying theme of the Old Testament. He says that $\sqrt{h}sd$ denotes “kindness, love, mercy, goodwill, faithfulness, favour, grace”³²¹, and that these concepts eventually find concentration in the grace formula³²². It now remains for this concluding discussion of the relevance of the mercy motto in a theology of the Old Testament to refer to Hermann Spieckermann, the scholar who coined the term “grace formula” (*Gnadenformel*). Whereas Wolfram Hermann conceives of his proposed theology via Israel’s worded response to the divine benevolence and beneficence, the approach of Spieckermann is from the other direction. To him, God’s love is the point of departure for a theology of the Old Testament. He titled a collection of his essays *Gottes Liebe*

³¹⁶ Preuß, op.cit. 29, 84.

³¹⁷ Formula and variants: Gen. 17:7; Ex. 6:3,6; Jer. 7:23, 30:22 & 31:33, Ezech. 34:24-25 & 36:28.

³¹⁸ For a discussion of this question, see for example Hans Heinrich Schmid, “‘Ich will euer Gott sein, und ihr werdet mein Volk sein’. Die sogenannte Bundesformel und die Frage nach der Mitte des Alten Testaments,” in: *Kirche. Festschrift für Günther Bornkamm* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980) 1-25.

³¹⁹ Hermann, *Jahweh* 3.

³²⁰ Hermann, op.cit. 35.

³²¹ “Güte, Liebe, Barmherzigkeit, Gunst, Treue, Huld, Gnade”; *ibid.*

³²² Hermann, op.cit. 65.

zu Israel³²³, a title which is *per se* telling. In the concluding essay in this volume, he discloses what he believes to be central in drafting a theology of the Old Testament, namely God's "declaration of love"³²⁴. Spieckermann is also one of the advocates of the grace formula as an encompassing theme of an Old Testament theology, as mentioned in chapter 1 with reference to his seminal article about the motto³²⁵. He declared that the theological importance of the formula made it advisable to accord it greater significance when determining the theological centre of the Old Testament, and concluded the article with a rhetorical plea that the motto be made more fruitful in the field of Old Testament theology³²⁶. Markus Witte is of the same opinion, declaring that the widespread appearance in the Old Testament of the grace formula and its variants, its verbal concentration or density and its composition has rightly led to the assessment that it should be given a central position in a theology of the Old Testament³²⁷.

From the above, it becomes evident that the importance of the grace formula as a summary of the message of the Old Testament becomes compelling. Its importance is attested by many voices from diverse traditions. Even the one "generic" reservation against most single-theme theologies, namely that the Wisdom literature is usually relegated to an inferior position within in such frameworks³²⁸, could be answered: if Dentan could find the genetic *locus* of the grace formula in the Wisdom literature, then, although his contention has not been widely accepted, it must be admitted that there must be some kinship between the mercy motto and the Wisdom literature, even if the kinship only exists in the "calm, rational and generous spirit" shared by both³²⁹. The mercy motto offers a synthesis of the divine and the human dimensions which are worded in the Old Testament: on the one hand, it is the account of an above-human, "transcendental" divine reality breaking into the lives of humans, and therefore an attestation of something which has objective truth and validity. On the other hand, it is also the account

³²³ Spieckermann, Hermann, *Gottes Liebe zu Israel*, FAT 33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001). Also cf. Reinhard Feldmeier & Hermann Spieckermann, *Der Gott der Lebendigen* [Monograph], TBT I (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

³²⁴ "Die Liebeserklärung Gottes: Entwurf einer Theologie des Alten Testaments", H. Spieckermann, *Gottes Liebe* 197-223. Published in English as "God's Steadfast Love. Towards a New Conception of Old Testament Theology", *Biblica* 81 (Roma: EPIB, 2000) 305-327.

³²⁵ H. Spieckermann, "Barmherzig und gnädig ist der Herr...", *ZAW* 102 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990): 1-18.

³²⁶ Spieckermann, "Barmherzig" 18.

³²⁷ "Die Streuung der alttestamentlichen Belege für die Gnadenformel und ihrer Derivate, deren sprachliche Dichte und kompositionelle Position haben daher zu Recht zu der Einschätzung geführt, die Rede von der Barmherzigkeit und dem Zorn Gottes in das Zentrum einer Theologie des Alten Testaments zu stellen"; Witte, "Barmherzigkeit" 181. As noted earlier, most scholars see a "dyssimmetry" between God's mercy and his anger, so that Witte's inclusion of "Zorn" in the above quote should be accorded less importance than the rest of his statement.

³²⁸ Cf. Brueggemann, *Theology* 36.

³²⁹ The Book of Jonah is at least as much a piece of wisdom literature, with its satire, humour, and "moral of the story", as it is a prophetic book. It may thus also serve as an entry point for the grace formula into the Wisdom literature.

of the human experience of this divine intervening activity, and therefore the deposition of a subjective, existentialist, “eye-witness” experience. Given its correlation with the divine deeds, its correspondence to the divine person, and given the fact that it is the rhetorical incorporation of the great works of God proclaimed throughout the Old Testament and of the human response to these works, it seems eminently suited to receive a greater and more sustained reception within the field of theology and dogmatics. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, referring to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, called it “that most universal song of praise”, and, almost breaking into a song of praise himself, continued with the the following words which we take the liberty of appropriating as an equally fitting description of the grace formula:

This hymn is sometimes called a confession of praise, sometimes a symbol of adoration, sometimes – and here I think one is closer to things divine – a hierarchic thanksgiving, for this hymn is a summary of all the blessed gifts which come to us from God. To me it seems that this song is a celebration of all the work of God on our behalf³³⁰.

³³⁰ Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 3.3.7, *Classics of Western Spirituality* (CWS), John Farina, ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1978-) 217-218, quoted in Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) 197-180, fn. 136.

Chapter 3:

The mercy motto in the New Testament

3.1 Methodological considerations

The mercy motto in its full guise does not appear in the New Testament. Given the importance of this formula in the Old Testament and the degree of continuity between the Old and New Testaments and the Jewish and Christian faith, this is a noteworthy phenomenon which needs to be examined. If there were a complete lack of continuity between the Jewish and the Christian tradition (for example, if all the authors and all the recipients of the neotestamentical scriptures were converted gentiles, neither Jewish nor *metuentes*), this discontinuity might explain the apparent absence of the mercy formula in the New Testament. As this is manifestly not the case, there rests an onus on the present study to investigate whether the grace motto forms part of the *continuum* between the two religious traditions, even if it is on a “subdominant” and not primary level. Part of the goal of the present research is to investigate whether, despite its formulaic absence, the grace motto nevertheless permeates the New Testament covertly.

It is therefore necessary to initiate a forensic search to “unearth” or bring to surface the mercy motto as (and if) it is embedded in the New Testament. What is surmised to be implicit, will have to be made explicit. The methodology which will be followed to establish the presence of the grace motto in the New Testament will encompass the following (bearing in mind that it will not always be possible to work within a certain category to the exclusion of other categories mentioned below – there will inevitably be some overlapping of categories):

3.1.1 *Word-pairs and word groups pointing to the mercy motto*

Through an exegetical study of certain texts, enhanced by intra- and intertextual references, an attempt will be made to discover relicts of the grace formula in the New Testament. By “relicts” is meant certain word-pairs or word groups which could possibly indicate the covert presence of the grace formula. This methodology had its precedent in chapter 1, where it was pointed out that the mercy motto could be summoned up through the mere usage of some of its constitutive elements³³¹. For the sake of the present argument, some examples will be recapitulated: in Nehemiah 9:31, it seems sufficient to bring to mind the mercy motto by quoting only the first two of its constituent elements (“gracious and merciful”), a supposition which is strengthened intratextually by the quotation of the entire formula in verse 17. The same pair of terms (in 2 Chronicles 30:18, Psalms 111:4b, 112:4b, 116:5), as well as the

³³¹ See chapter 1, section 1.3, p. 8 and footnotes.

second part of the mercy motto (“slow to anger and full of steadfast love” in Numeri 14:18 and Micah 7:18b), are also taken by scholars as “shorthand” versions of, and intertextual allusions to the grace motto. An attempt will thus likewise be made to find possible shorthand versions of, or allusions to the grace formula in the Second Testament. James 5:11 with its co-incidence of the terms πολὺσπλαγχνός and οἰκτίρμων seems to be one example of such a recapitulation in shorthand of the grace formula.

In this respect, however, a *caveat* should be raised: it might be rather facile and insufficient to find in a single term like οἰκτίρμων or ἐλεήμων proof of a reference to the mercy motto, unless such a single term seems to “ensnare” or “pull along” additional terms when it is lifted from its setting³³². From a methodological viewpoint, it would in any case be spreading the net impossibly wide if all the instances in the New Testament of alone-standing Greek concepts which are semantically related to the mercy motto were to come under the loupe³³³. Thus, only when two or more of these terms are found in apposition, will the single terms be investigated. In this regard, there is another methodological circumscription which will be adhered to: word-pairs and word groups containing terms similar to those of the mercy motto appear in every salutation which heads almost every epistle in the New Testament³³⁴. To include these 18 occurrences in the study (and for the sake of thoroughness also to include the farewell formulas at the end of some epistles) would unduly widen the focus of the present research. These two “epistolary categories” will therefore not be considered.

With regard to the usage of single terms as a springboard for investigation, it seems as though *splangchn-* and its inflections which sometimes appear in word-pairs or -groups, but also as alone-standing terms, are likely-looking instances for such an approach. In general though, the *modus operandi* will in the first instance be to find word-pairs, larger groupings of terms or

³³² Sometimes, a single term does display such “attractational” potency: in an interesting article about Paul’s preference for the designation χάρις instead of ἔλεος, Cilliers Breytenbach refers to Paul’s use of the single term τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν (in his expression διὰ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ, Rom. 12:1) and comments that “The phrase resounds Exod 34:6...”, Breytenbach, “‘Charis’ and ‘Eleos’ in Paul’s Letter to the Romans”, in *Grace, Reconciliation, Concord*, SNT 135 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010) 213. Paul’s term *charis* receives similar treatment as single term in the article; cogency is maintained by co-opting additional support from other (inter-/inter-) textual indicators.

³³³ All of the following Greek terms are, or could be translations of the Hebrew terms contained in the mercy motto: *eleos*, *oiktirmoi*, *splangchna*, *charis*, *chrêstotês*, *agapê*, *pistis* and *alêtheia*, in all their various nominal, adjectival, verbal and adverbial inflections. The occurrences of just the nominal/verbal forms of these terms are the following: *eleos/eleê* 27 times/32 times, *oiktirmoi/oiktirô* 5/2, *splangchna/splangchnizomai* 11/12, *charis/chaino* 164/74, *chrêstotês/chraomai* 10/11, *agapê/agapaô* 116/143 and *pistis/pisteuô* 243/241, yielding a total of 991 cases. Cf. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs> for statistics.

³³⁴ Rom.1:7, 1 Cor.1:3, 2 Cor.1:2, Gal. 1:3, Eph.1:2, Phil.1:2, Col.1:2, 1 Th.1:1, 2 Th.1:2, 1 Tim.1:2, 2 Tim.1:2, Tit.1:4, Phlm.1:3, Jam. 1:1, 1 Pet.1:2, 2 Pet.1:2, 2 Jhn.1:3, Jd.1:2.

even entire pericopes which may be resonating with the grace motto, instances of which we have already witnessed in chapter 2 regarding the Old Testament.

3.1.2 *Mention of divine deeds evincing the mercy motto*

A second method would be to investigate whether the grace motto could be “extrapolated” or surmised from the appearance of other textual indicators. It has been pointed out in chapter 2 that the divine attributes listed in the grace motto always find their complement in divine activities, and thus that wherever the mercy motto appears in its full or in a condensed form, invariably mention is also made of God’s wonderful works or mighty marvels (what was typified as the “divine deed dimension”). It was argued in chapter 2 that it is not possible to conceive of God’s mercy without reference to his works, and conversely that it is also not possible to interpret his deeds without apprehending his grace and compassion. The two concepts mutually imply each other, analogous to a palindrome which yields the same result whether read forward or backwards. Through a similar process of “converse” interpretation, it may prove possible to infer the implicit presence of the mercy motto within a context where explicit reference is made to God’s works or deeds. Care should be taken not to take any or all wordings about divine deeds as indicators of the presence of the grace formula – that would again be spreading the methodological net too wide. Rather, the mention of works/deeds in passages where concepts such as mercy or patience are also mentioned could serve as additional confirmation that these words (mercy, patience, etc.) may refer to the mercy motto. The divine deed dimension as witnessed in the New Testament could be a matrix within which the grace motto could be deduced conceptually, provided that concepts similar to those of the grace formula also appear in the relevant passage. This methodology must therefore be seen as ancillary, serving to confirm any supposition that a word-pair (or in the event, even a single term) might be a reference to the grace motto when mention is made of God’s deeds and accomplishments within the same context. Additionally, such an avenue of approach could also be broadened to identify words or sentences in the New Testament which do not refer overtly to the divine deed dimension in a semantic sense, but which could nevertheless be conceptualised as in some other way eliciting the grace formula. Promising instances are the terms σπλάγχνα/σπλαγχνίζομαι in their different declensions/conjugations, and the plea to Jesus, Κύριε ἐλέησον (“Lord, have mercy”), both instances to which the enactment of the grace formula seems the desired outcome.

3.1.3 *Other wordings indicative of the mercy motto*

A third approach would be to inquire whether certain phrases not containing some or all the elements of the mercy motto may nevertheless be seen as corresponding to this formula. In the Old Testament, one finds instances in which the mercy motto seems to be paraphrased

with the aid of synonymous or semantically-related terms. It may suffice to refer to a few psalms which serve as examples of this procedure. In Psalm 40:11-12, we find the following “concatenation” of terms: “your faithfulness and your saving work” (אַמוּנָתְךָ וַתְּשׁוּעָתְךָ) “your loyalty and lovingkindness” (וְאַמְתָּךְ וְחַסְדְּךָ), “your mercy” (רַחֲמֶיךָ) and “your loyalty and lovingkindness” (וְאַמְתָּךְ וְחַסְדְּךָ). Apart from the term “your salvation”, which is at least a reference to the divine deeds, the three other terms employed are terms shared with the mercy motto, even though not retaining the same inflections and also not worded as a formula. In Psalm 86, the complete mercy motto, serving as pivotal point in this psalm, is quoted in verse 15: “But thou, O Lord, are a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness”. However, this formula seems to be hinted at or anticipated in verse 5: “For thou, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love”, with טוֹב (“good”) and סָלַח (“forgiving”) appearing to be semantic substitutions of the respective terms רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן (“merciful and gracious”) and אֶפְסָרָה (“slow to anger”) of the mercy motto. Other possible examples are Psalm 100:5, where the established liturgical *ritornello* of praise, containing the terms “good” and “his lovingkindness” (טוֹב and חַסְדְּךָ) together with the addition of the term “his faithfulness” (אַמוּנָתְךָ) seem to be a paraphrase of the mercy motto, and Psalm 106:45-46, where the succession of the terms “for in his great love” (בְּגִדּוֹ ‘כָּבֵד’), “gracious” (חַנּוּן), and “mercies” (רַחֲמִים), also appears to be a loose statement of the grace formula³³⁵. Conglomerations of similar Greek terms in the New Testament might upon further investigation likewise prove to be an allusion to, or recapitulation of the grace motto. This methodology is similar to the approach mentioned first (under 3.1.1); the only difference is that it seeks other terms which are not used in the mercy formula but are analogous to them. The grouping of related words found in Romans 2:4 is one such an example.

3.1.4 Entire pericopes summoning the mercy motto

A final step in attempting to make overt the hidden presence of the mercy motto in the New Testament would be to identify entire pericopes which may be steeped in the mercy formula. There are more than one such promising instance, for example the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35).

3.1.5 Methods considered but discarded

For the sake of comprehensiveness, it should be mentioned that one other methodology was considered but deemed not feasible: the mercy motto is the product of the Jewish faith. Conceptually, one could therefore have employed a methodology in terms of which only those neotestamentary writings which presupposed a Jewish author *and* Jewish audience needed

³³⁵ In this extended psalm of praise (containing 48 verses) we find at least 8 instances of terms referring to the divine deeds, besides the fact that the entire psalm is a recital of works wrought by God.

to be investigated, the assumption being that an author or audience with entirely gentile roots would not be familiar with the grace formula. This would in theory also scale down the field of research regarding the appearance of the grace motto in the New Testament. However, if scholars do not even agree on the authorship and audience (Jewish and/or Gentile and/or “mixed”) of a Gospel such as Matthew, or an Epistle such as James, it would hardly be effectual or productive to attempt a demarcation along the lines of supposed authorship or reciprocity. This reservation would still apply even it could be proven conclusively that a New Testament author and his audience were converted gentiles, as it is hard to imagine that these persons would not after their conversion have received instruction in the basic principles of “The Way”³³⁶, which was rooted in the Jewish tradition of faith.

3.1.6 Terminological accuracy

Lastly: under point 1.2, the *caveat* was raised that, when attempting to find a connection in the New Testament to the grace formula of the Old Testament, undue significance should not be given to a Greek term standing on its own, but rather to the pairing and grouping of terms. In respect of these single terms in Greek, an additional *caveat* should be issued. In the LXX, wherever the mercy motto is encountered, its Hebrew terms are consistently represented by the same Greek terms: $\omicron\iota\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\rho\mu\omega\nu$, $\mu\eta\nu$ = $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\eta\mu\omega\nu$, $\eta\alpha\chi\alpha\phi\iota\mu$ μακρόθυμος, $\mu\eta\lambda\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ רַב־חַסֵּד = πολυέλεος καὶ ἀληθινός. However, in other contexts, consistent translations of the same Hebrew term by the same Greek term are not found; the Greek terms are applied interchangeably. This phenomenon will be briefly highlighted by referring to the constituent terms of the mercy motto as found in the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint.

3.1.6.1 \sqrt{rhm} , $\sqrt{oiktirp-}$, $\sqrt{\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon-}$

For the translation of the different *verbal* forms of \sqrt{rhm} (which is also the first constituent element of the mercy motto), the Greek variants of $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ and $\omicron\iota\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\rho\omega$ are the usual terms employed, with $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ having the highest frequency of use. On the other hand, for the translation of the *nominal* and *adjectival* forms of \sqrt{rhm} , $\omicron\iota\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\rho\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ is more favoured than $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$: according to the ThDOT, 28 instances versus 7 in the case of the noun, and 12 versus 2 instances in the case of the adjective³³⁷. It is only with regard to the translation of the mercy motto that \sqrt{rhm} is consistently translated with $\omicron\iota\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\rho\mu\omega\nu$; elsewhere there seems to exist an interchangeability of terms. When occupied with a terminological method, account must

³³⁶ Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22.

³³⁷ Horacio Simian-Yofre, entry “ \sqrt{rhm} ; rah^amim ; $rahum$; $rah^amānī$ ”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. XIII, Gerhard Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren & Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds. (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004) 439. However, it erroneous to suppose that Psalm 145:8 is one of the 2 instances in which $\omicron\iota\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\rho\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ is favoured as a translation of \sqrt{rhm} above $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$, as stated in the ThDOT: in the Hebrew, the order of the first 2 terms of the grace formula has been inverted; the LXX simply keeps the standard order to retain its formulaic nature. In this instance, the Hebrew and Greek terms should thus be “cross-paired.”

therefore be taken of the fact that, if the possible presence of the mercy motto (in this case with \sqrt{rhm} as indicator) is to be surmised, both Greek terms, and possibly even related Greek terms, have to be considered.

3.1.6.2 \sqrt{hnn} , $\sqrt{\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon}$, \sqrt{oiktir} -

The same terminological inconsistencies appear in connection with the second constituent of the mercy motto. In the cases of the grace formula, \sqrt{hnn} is consistently rendered by ἐλεήμων, but elsewhere in the LXX, \sqrt{hnn}/\sqrt{hnn} is represented by both ἐλεέω and οἰκτίρω in their required inflections³³⁸. There appears to be no discernible pattern or *modus operandi* according to which \sqrt{hnn} was either translated exclusively with $\sqrt{\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\acute{\epsilon}}$ -, or with \sqrt{oiktir} - in a consistent way. Regarding both \sqrt{rhm} and \sqrt{hnn} , this apparent incongruity in translated terms becomes more understandable if one takes into account that the Hebrew terms may be regarded as a *hendiadys*, a mutually-complementing semantic word-pair. It is logical that the semantic distinction between ἔλεος/ἐλεήμων/etc. and οἰκτιρμός/οἰκτίρων/etc. will likewise become fluid. This would be a ready explanation for the interchangeability of the terms. “There is no palpable distinction between oiktirein/oiktirmoi and eleein/eleos; hnn and rhm are rendered by both oiktirein and eleein and in the LXX oiktirein and eleein are combined or used as parallels like the Hb rhm pi and hnn”³³⁹. The same methodological consideration mentioned under the previous point must therefore also be applied here.

3.1.6.3 *’erek ’appayim*, μακροθυμία, ἀνοχή, ἐπιείκεια

The Hebrew term עִרְאָה אֵפֶיַם (“slow to anger”) is found in the seven instances of the mercy motto and also elsewhere in the *Old Testament* where it is employed as an epithet for God³⁴⁰. Notably, this term is consistently translated with μακροθυμία (in various inflections) in the *Septuaginta*. This phenomenon could provisionally be taken as a methodological precedent to assume that, in *New Testament* usage, whenever the Greek term μακροθυμία is used in connection with God³⁴¹, the Hebrew term is the referent. A further step would then be to explore whether the Greek term in New Testament usage might serve as a possible clue to the covert presence of the grace formula, especially if other textual markers are also present.

³³⁸ In anticipation of the later discussion already hinted at under 3.1.2, mention could already be made here that $\sqrt{\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\acute{\epsilon}}$ - in the supplication ἐλέησόν με κύριε is always a rendering of the Hebrew \sqrt{hnn} : יְיָנוּחַ יְדָיָךְ.

³³⁹ Rudolf Bultmann, entry “οἰκτίρω, οἰκτιρμος, οἰκτιρμών”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. V, Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, eds. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer & Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 160.

³⁴⁰ For example Jer. 15:15 (יְיָנוּחַ יְדָיָךְ “your long-suffering”).

³⁴¹ There are six instances: Rom. 2:4 (τῆς μακροθυμίας), Rom. 9:22 (ἐν πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ), 1 Tim. 1:16 (τὴν ἅπασαν μακροθυμίαν), 1 Pet. 3:20 (ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ μακροθυμία), 2 Pet. 3:9 (μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς) and 2 Pet. 3:15 (τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν μακροθυμίαν). The only possible alternative NT Greek terms for the Hebrew עִרְאָה אֵפֶיַם might be the following: 1. ἀνοχή, twice used as a description of God’s tolerance/forbearance (Rom. 2:4, 3:26), and 2. ἐπιείκεια, in the single instance where it is used in connection with Christ (and not to Christians) in 2 Cor. 10:1 (διὰ πραΰτητος καὶ ἐπιεικείας τοῦ χριστοῦ), provided it is translated as “forbearance”. However, in this specific case, most translations favour “gentleness” or “kindness”.

Of the six instances of this use in the New Testament, Romans 2:4 would be a candidate for further investigation, as it presents a composite of terms: in addition to “his long-suffering” (τῆς μακροθυμίας), also “the richness of his kindness” (ἡ τοῦ πλοῦτου τῆς χρηστότητος αὐτοῦ), which sounds like an allusion to the last element of the mercy motto (namely *ṭṭḥ-ḥḥ*, “abundant goodness”), “of his forbearance” (τῆς ἀνοχῆς) which sounds like an allusion to the middle constituent of the grace motto (*ḥḥ ḥḥ*, “slow to anger”) and “God’s goodness” (τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ) which may be a further allusion to the concluding term of the grace formula (*rab-ḥesed/polueleos*). Another possibility is offered by 1 Timothy 1:16, as it contains the term ἡλεήθην (“He was merciful”) in conjunction with the term for “long-suffering” (μακροθυμία)³⁴².

3.1.6.4 *rab-ḥesed [we’emet], πολυέλεος [καὶ ἀληθινός]*

The final constituent of the mercy motto is the Hebrew term *ṭṭḥ-ḥḥ* or simply *ṭṭḥ-ḥḥ*. The LXX translation of this word (or word-pair), specifically in the mercy motto, is πολυέλεος (καὶ ἀληθινός). The Greek term otherwise mostly employed in the Septuagint as a translation of the concept *ṭṭḥ* is ἔλεος³⁴³. Again, this gives rise to anomalies, as its cognate ἐλεήμων is also the term used for the Hebrew *ḥḥn*, as pointed out earlier. This matter is exacerbated by the fact that in modern translations, *ḥsd* as well as ἔλεος are freely rendered with a variety of terms, such as “goodness”, “mercy”, “love”, “kindness” and “lovingkindness”. At the very least, care should thus be taken not to interpret ἔλεος as representing the Hebrew *ḥsd* if it is in fact *ḥnn* which is alluded to (or vice versa). A last methodological consideration would be to bear in mind that both *ḥsd* and ἐλεέω could also refer to humans, and that such references should not receive priority in a study of the presence of the mercy motto in the New Testament, as such references would already be “twice removed”³⁴⁴ from the original Hebrew term employed in the motto, which is always related to God.

3.1.6.5 *Concluding remarks*

The reason for the abovementioned discussion of the different terms incorporated in the mercy motto, as well as their various translations into Greek and also modern languages, was firstly to point out that these are the terms that will serve as clues to indicate the possible, but covert,

³⁴² A few amplifying remarks could be made here: in the New Testament, the term “long-suffering”/“patient” is also utilised eight times with reference to humans, in 2 Cor. 6:6, Gal. 5:22, Eph. 4:2, Col. 1:11 & 3:12, 2 Tim. 3:10 & 4:2 and Jam. 5:10. This corresponds to the use in the Old Testament Wisdom literature of the term *ḥḥ ḥḥ* in connection with the wise man (Prov. 15:18 & 16:32), whereas the Old Testament prophetic literature uses this term exclusively with reference to God. It would not be feasible to take the abovementioned eight NT occurrences of the term as allusions to the grace formula which, after all, is a statement about God.

³⁴³ Almost 400 times; Hans-Helmut Esser, entry “Barmherzigkeit”, *Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament*, Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther & Hans Bietenhard, eds. (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1967) 53. Some examples are Psalms 5:8, 17:7, 25:6, 31:8, 17&21, 40:11, 42:9, 48:10, Isaiah 16:5 and Lamentations 3:22,32. There are 78 instances of ἐλεέω and its cognates in the New Testament (ibid.).

³⁴⁴ Firstly becoming a translation of Hebrew statements about God, and then secondly becoming a statement applied to humans.

presence of the grace formula in the New Testament. Furthermore, it was necessary to point out that, from a methodological point of view, care has to be taken not to simply equate the occurrence in the New Testament of a specific Greek term, like ἔλεος, to a single and specific term in the Hebrew grace formula, like *hēn* (“grace/favour”) as it may actually refer to *hesed* (“goodness”, “mercy” or “lovingkindness”), *rahûm* (“mercy”, “grace”) or *tûb* (“goodness”). It should be added that the temptation to use the terms of any modern translation as pointers to constituents of the mercy motto should also be resisted, since, for example, “good(ness)”, instead of implying τὸν or ἔλεος, could refer to the Greek terms χρηστός/χρηστότης or the Hebrew terms רַחוּם/טוֹב (“good”/“your goodness”), both of which are not items of the mercy motto. It would thus be invalid and facile to take terms used in a modern translation on their face value and infer that they are allusions to the originating term in either Greek or Hebrew. This erroneous methodology seems to be operative in the case of a discussion in Bauer-Aland³⁴⁵ of the Greek term σπλαγχνίζομαι (“to have pity on”, “to feel deeply sorry for”; cf. Hebrew *√rhm*). The first and third citations that are given regarding this term are Exodus 2:6 and 1 Samuel 23:21, but in neither instance is there a correspondence between the German denotations and either the Greek or the original Hebrew: the two Greek terms employed respectively are ἐφείσατο and ἐπονέσατε, both of which are not even cognates of σπλαγχνίζομαι, and the two Hebrew terms utilised are לָמַח and מָלַח which have as their root *√hml*, and not *√rhm*. The only explanation is that they seem to have taken a German translation of these verses as starting point³⁴⁶ and to have surmised that the German expressions have as their referential the Hebrew *√rhm* or the Greek σπλαγχνίζομαι³⁴⁷. Such are the vagaries of exegetics.

3.2 Allusions in the New Testament to the mercy motto

In the next sections, word-pairs in the New Testament possibly alluding to the mercy motto will firstly be discussed, followed by word groups and finally entire pericopes which may be

³⁴⁵ *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Walter Bauer), Kurt & Barbara Aland, eds. (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1988) col.1523.

³⁴⁶ Possibly “da jammerte es sie” [LUTH1545], “da erbarmte sie sich” [SCH2000] or “bekam Mitleid” [HOF] in Exodus 2:6, or “erbarmt” [LUTH1545 and SCH2000] and “Mitleid” [HOF] in 1 Samuel 23:21. See biblegateway.com for various translations.

³⁴⁷ The same methodology seems in effect in the fourth instance cited by Bauer-Aland (Ezekiel 24:21) but on a “next level”: there is in fact not even a direct semantic connection to the concept “heartfelt sympathy” in the original Hebrew or in the LXX translation. Evidently, the German text was taken as impetus. Edward Schillebeeckx, in his work *Gerechtigheid en liefde: genade en bevrijding* (Bloemendaal: Nelissen, 1977), esp. 71-141 and 423-467, seems to have started with the the term “genade” in the Dutch Bible and then to have traced it back to the Hebrew *‘aman/’emet*, *chesed* and *chanan/chen* (his transliterations), the Greek *charis*, *eleos* and *alêtheia*, as well as the Latin *miser cordia* and *veritas* – thereby committing the hardly understandable omission of not even discussing, nor mentioning, the Hebrew term central to the concept of grace (*genade*), namely *rahām/rahāʾmim*, nor the important Greek term *oiktirō/oiktirmôn*. He also fails to mention or discuss the mercy motto, which, given the magnitude of his *opus* (903 pages), seems inexplicable.

allusions to the grace motto. There is one Greek term which is represented in all three these categories and also has the potentiality to denote the mercy motto even when standing on its own, and that is *splangchn*-. Word-pairs or -groups, or pericopes in which this term is one of the elements will therefore receive discussion in the next chapters³⁴⁸.

3.2.1 Word-pairs

3.2.1.1 *Charis kai alêtheia/χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια* (John 1:14, 17)

There could not be much doubt that this phrase is a *reprise* of the last part of the grace formula as it appears in Exodus 34:6 and Psalm 86:15: “[full of] lovingkindness and faithfulness/truth”³⁴⁹. At this point, the matter of translation of the Hebrew terms (*rab-ḥesed we’emet*) first has to be addressed. It became quite evident that the word-pair formed a *hendiadys*, with *’emet* being a “one-word exposition” of the meaning of *ḥesed*: love/lovingkindness/goodness/grace/mercy (all of which are terms used in various English translations) is only true love etc. if it remains constant, reliable and faithful; therefore, *’emet* served as a term qualifying *ḥesed*. True love is trustworthy at all times; trustworthiness and truthfulness were both integral notions of the Hebrew *’emet*³⁵⁰. It was also said that this is the possible reason why the last element *we’emet* is not included in five of the seven instances of the full mercy formula: since trustworthiness was an implicit aspect of lovingkindness, it became superfluous or pleonastic to include it. The present writer should however like to submit the following contention for judgement: starting with the LXX translation of the Hebrew epithets *rab-ḥesed we’emet* as πολυέλεος καὶ ἀληθινός, a tendency to a type of dualism or separation between the two concepts was set in motion: in typical Greek/Athenian hypostasising and ideational vein, the terms “kindness/kind” and “truth/truthful” became separate notions. To word this contention differently: regardless of what the term ἀλήθεια and its inflections may have meant at the time of the LXX translation, a diachronic process lasting to the present was set in motion in which the terms *alêtheia/alêthinos* etc. gradually became perceived of as designating something apart and separate from “goodness/lovingkindness”³⁵¹. The average Western person, on reading the term “truth”, does not as a natural consequence intuitively perceive it as also designating “trustworthy”. It requires a process of conscious reasoning to arrive at the correlation between the two conceptions, along the lines of a

³⁴⁸ Word-pairs: Lk. 1:78, Philipp. 2:1, Jam. 5:11; word group: Col. 3:12; pericopes: Lk. 10:30-37, Mt. 18:23-35.

³⁴⁹ In the other 5 cases of the full formula, *wē’emet* (“and faithfulness/fidelity/constancy/trustworthiness”) is omitted. Reasons for the omission were given in ch. 2, subsection 2.2.4.

³⁵⁰ It was also pointed out in chapter 2, subsection 2.2.4 that “truth” and “troth”, as well as “truth/true” and the Germanic *treu/trou/trouw* used to be indivisible correlates having an ambivalent/double meaning.

³⁵¹ Again, this remark must be circumscribed: it only applies to translation of the Hebrew into Western or Western European languages, not for example African languages. The present author’s knowledge of African languages is limited to Sesotho.

proposition like the following: “If someone is truthful, then it means that they could also be trusted; just as that which is trustworthy is also true.” It was (only) the Hebrew/Jewish mind or “cosmovision”³⁵² that grasped both these notions simultaneously and intuitively. That this diachronic process has indeed been operative up to the present could possibly be inferred from the choices made when the Hebrew is translated into various Western European languages: there is a constant division of the translational options into two categories: either words denoting “faithfulness”³⁵³, or words denoting “truth”³⁵⁴, terms which in modern-day usage certainly not enjoy the same degree of semantic overlapping than they might have enjoyed in earlier times. Against this contention, it could be countered that the posited division/dualism may only exist in the author’s own mind, but the two different categories of translational options suggest something else, namely that there is no modern word in these languages that adequately incorporates both the notion of fidelity and of veracity in its semantic field, so that translators are faced with an “either-or” choice. Stated otherwise: is there a word that could serve as single substitute for both categories of terms used in translation? The answer must be in the negative; such a designation is hard to find. It seems as though it is only the archaic term “troth” that could fulfil this dual semantic function of denoting “truth and trust”.

The relevance of the above-mentioned hypothesis is the following: firstly, when the surmised presence of the mercy motto is posited from appearances of the word-pair *charis kai alêtheia*, or of other word-pairs/-groups containing the term *alêtheia* in the New Testament, one must account for the degree of equivalence or non-equivalence between the Greek translation and the original Hebrew. Secondly, although this is not germane to the present study: if a translator only has a choice between the two abovementioned categories of meanings, opting for words which denote “fidelity/faithfulness” seems a better choice than opting for terms denoting “truth”, as the underlying and more fundamental concept is that of God’s constant goodness which is similarly expressed in the Hebrew *ʾôlām ḥasdo*: “His goodness lasts forever!” The second consideration will be developed further in the following discussion.

The first of the two citations is John 1:14, καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν... πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας, with the last word-pair usually translated as “[full of] grace and

³⁵² From the Spanish *la cosmovisión ebrea*, a felicitous term coined by José Severino Croatta, “Yo soy el que estoy (contigo). La interpretación del nombre de ‘Yahvé’ en Ex 3,13-14”, *El misterio de la palabra*, FS D. Luis Alonso Schökel, Vicente Collado & Eduardo Zurro, eds. (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1983) 147.

³⁵³ English translations: constancy, fidelity, loyalty; Afrikaans *trou*; Danish *trofasthed*; Dutch *trouw*; French *fidélité*; German *Treue*; Icelandic *trúfastur*; Italian *fedeltà*; Spanish *fidelidad/lealdad*; Swedish *trofasthet*.

³⁵⁴ English translations: truth; Dutch *waarheid*; French *vérité*; Norwegian *sannhet*; Spanish *verdad*; Swedish *sanning*. Afrikaans, Danish, German, Icelandic and Italian only have equivalents of “faithfulness”. Some of the translations were consulted on the website Bible Gateway; <https://www.biblegateway.com>.

truth". It should be taken into account that the concept *alêtheia* is an important motif in the Gospel of John, and also has a function as separate and alone-standing term and theme³⁵⁵. There are however two main arguments for claiming that the wording in John 1:14 is an allusion to the mercy motto: firstly, the word-pair itself is a parallel to the Hebrew *hesed w'e'met*, and secondly, the adjective *plêrês* is a direct equivalent of the Hebrew *rab* ("full of/filled with/abounding in") in the wording *rab-hesed we'emet*. This contention would be weakened if it could be proven beyond doubt that John was not a Jew and/or had no Jewish background - a fact which might have been used to argue that he would not have been familiar with the Hebrew formula - but the evidence from the gospel itself rather proves the contrary³⁵⁶. If this verse is indeed an allusion to the mercy motto, the question should be asked whether a better translation of *charitos kai alêtheias* as "grace and truth" would not rather be "goodness and reliability" or similar terms ("lovingkindness and loyalty", "favour and fidelity" etc.) in order to evoke the Hebrew notion lying behind the Greek³⁵⁷.

The second citation is John 1:17, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο. The above line of reasoning could likewise be applied to this wording: admittedly, the adjective *plêrês* is absent, but it should be noted that the previous verse reads "From his fulness (*ek tou plêrômatos autou*) all of us have received grace upon grace" (or perhaps "good upon good"), so that when *charis* is reiterated in the following verse, it may well be apprehended together with the notion of "full/fulness" or "abundant/abundance". Secondly, Bauer-Aland cites Exodus 34:6 as being a parallel to John 1:17³⁵⁸. Thirdly, there is also a possible intertextual correlation which might strengthen the supposition that John's use of *charis kai alêtheia* in verse 17 is an echo of the mercy motto: in verse 16, he mentions the law given to Moses. This event is related in Exodus chapter 33-34: Moses destroyed the first set of tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed and YHWH withdrew Himself from Israel. Moses then intercedes for Israel, upon which YHWH relents. In Exodus 34 it is related how YHWH renews the covenant. In Exodus 34:6, we find the recital of the mercy motto. There is a similar "procession" of concepts in John 1:16-17, from mentioning the law given through Moses to introducing the *charis* and *alêtheia* that came through Christ. Again, a better translation would then be one which preserves the notions of the mercy motto and contrasts it with the "hard"

³⁵⁵ The term is often used in a "forensic" sense, as an attestation of the truth; cf. John 3:21, 5:33, 8:45, 18:38, 19:35. The concept appears 25 times in various declensions in the Gospel of John.

³⁵⁶ Cf. his phrases ἵνα ἡ γραφὴ πληρωθῇ (John 19:24, 36) and καὶ πάλιν ἑτέρα γραφὴ λέγει (John 19:37).

³⁵⁷ One consideration in favour of "truth" would be if John expressly introduced the concept here, at the beginning of his gospel, in order to develop the theme through the course of his gospel.

³⁵⁸ Bauer-Aland, *Greek NT* 248. They also cite Pss. 25:10, 40:11 and 85:11 ("mercy/lovingkindness and truth"), but strangely enough not Ps. 86:15 in which this phrase is part of the full mercy formula.

law given to Moses: “kindness and constancy”, or “lovingkindness and loyalty”, never intermittent, never discontinued or interrupted.

3.2.1.2 *Pistis kai alêtheia/πίστις καὶ ἀλήθεια* (2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Timothy 2:7, Revelation 19:11, 22:6)

The word-pair as found in especially the first two cited verses may be seen as tangential to the mercy motto, as both members of the word-pair could only have the last (and five-times omitted) element of the mercy motto as referential, namely *’emet*, in which the connotations of trustworthiness as well as truthfulness form a unified semantic concept. However, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, there are clear intratextual markers which indicate that the relevant phrase [εἰς σωτηρίαν ἐν...] πίστει ἀληθείας should be translated as “[for salvation...] through belief in the truth”, and not as “true faithfulness” or “faithful trustworthiness” or the like. The previous pericope from verse 1 to 12 deals with the “lawless one” (ὁ ἄνομος) and those who did not believe the truth: “they refused to love the truth” (verse 10), “believe what is false” (verse 11) and “did not believe the truth” (verse 12). In the new pericope starting with verse 13, we read that the chosen and beloved ones have been saved “through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth”.

The second citation is 1 Timothy 2:7, διδάσκαλος ἐθνῶν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀληθείᾳ (“a teacher of the gentiles in faith and truth”). Again, we find an allusion to “truth” in one of the previous verses in the same pericope (εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας, “to knowledge of the truth”, verse 4), which would make the phrase “faith and truth” an apt translation. On the other hand, we twice find the sentence πιστὸς ὁ λόγος in the surrounding context (1 Timothy 1:15 and 3:1). Undoubtedly, *pistos* here serves as the direct equivalent of the Hebrew concept *’emet* meaning truthful and trustworthy. Again, translations alter between using either “true” or “faithful”³⁵⁹. The most feasible solution would be to assume that the concept *alêtheia* is throughout the epistle used in ambiguous sense, therefore signifying in the pertinent verse (1 Timothy 2:7) that Paul was both a teacher of the truth, and also a trustworthy and reliable teacher in the double sense of the Hebrew *’emet*. One could however in any case be sure about which Hebrew term lies behind the usage of *alêtheia*.

The last two citations are Revelation 19:11, καλούμενος πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός (“He is called the Faithful and the True”) and Revelation 22:6, οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοί (“These words are faithful/trustworthy/reliable and true”). The word-pair in Greek, almost without exception rendered as “faithful and true” in English translations as well as with similar, equivalent terms

³⁵⁹ Of the translations consulted, 15 opted for “true/truth”, 40 for “trustworthy/faithful/sure/reliable”, while 3 translations used both concepts in a kind of paraphrase, which may be the best option.

in the other languages which were consulted, are nothing but a short exposition of the last element of the grace motto, namely *'emet*. One could take these word-pairs as further proof that the Hebrew notion of *'emet*, represented in the LXX by the Greek term *alêtheia*, became “lost in translation”: *pistos* in the sense of “reliability” has to be conjoined with *alêtheia* to ensure that, in the Greek designation, the full meaning of the Hebrew term in which “trustworthiness” and “truthfulness” are united, is conveyed. In this regard, some intertextual references could also be pointed out: In Revelation 1:5, Jesus is called “the faithful witness” (ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός) together with other predicates like “the firstborn from the dead” and “ruler of the kings of the earth”. This concept is taken up again in Revelation 3:7 (ὁ ἀληθινός) and 3:14 (ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός). One could conclude with reasonable certainty that *alêthinos* in Revelation 3:7 is here used as a semantic equivalent of *pistos* in the other two verses. At the very least, this may again be taken as proof that the primary meaning of *alêtheia* is not “truth”, but “faithfulness”³⁶⁰. A last remark will conclude this discussion: the most pleasing or fitting translation of *pistos kai alêthinos* would possibly be “trustworthy and true”³⁶¹.

3.2.1.3 *Pistis kai agapê/πίστις καὶ ἀγάπη* (1 Timothy 1:14, Philemon 1:5)

1 Timothy 1:14	ὑπερεπλεόνασεν δὲ ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν μετὰ πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ The grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with the [faith] and [love] ³⁶² that are in Christ Jesus.
Philemon 1:5	ἀκούων σου τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν ἣν ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους Hearing about your love and faith which you have towards the Lord Jesus and all the saints.

³⁶⁰ In the Wisdom of Solomon 15:1, we find the grace motto in reversed order and with *chrêstos* replacing *polueleos*: Σὺ δὲ ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν χρηστὸς καὶ ἀληθής, μακρόθυμος καὶ ἐν ἐλέει διοικῶν τὰ πάντα. Thus, instead of the standard word-pair *polueleos kai alêthinos*, we have the word-pair *chrêstos kai alêthês* representing the Hebrew *rab-ḥesed w^e'emet*. Quotation of Wisd. Sol. from <https://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/chapter.asp?book=29&page=15>.

³⁶¹ Although it lies beyond the scope of this study, the interesting debate whether the construction διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom. 3:22, cf. δικαιῶντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ, Rom. 3:26) contains an objective genitive (“faith in Jesus Christ”) or a subjective genitive (“the faithfulness of Jesus Christ”) is of some relevance to the above discourse. If the mercy motto is adduced, the weight of evidence shifts in favour of the second option: through “Christ’s faithfulness”, which is the re-enactment of God’s *'emet* as worded in the mercy motto and elsewhere in the Old Testament, we are saved, and not through “our faith in Christ”. This view would also obviate any tendency to award “merit” to having faith as though it is a “work” or achievement; as it were, we are not even saved by our faith in Christ, but by his faithfulness alone. For some thoughts on this debate, see e.g. Gerald W. Peterman, “Δικαιωθῆναι διὰ τῆς ἐκ Χριστοῦ πίστεως: Notes on a Neglected Greek Construction”, *New Testament Studies*, Vol.56:1 (Cambridge: CUP, 2009) 163-168.

³⁶² “Faith and “love” are bracketed, as alternative translations will be considered under point 3.2.3.

Since the first citation is part of an entire pericope which is of interest (1 Timothy 1:12-17), it will receive discussion under point 3.2.3. In respect of the second quotation, some reservations could be tabled about the translation of τὴν πίστιν (Accusative) as “the faith [that you have in the Lord Jesus and towards all the saints]”. Firstly, it would not be sound theology to “believe in” the saints in the same way than believing in Christ Jesus. A possible counter-argument could be that Paul tries to avoid this misconception by employing different prepositions respectively governing “the Lord Jesus” (*pros*) and “all the saints” (*eis*) in conjunction with “the faith”. However, most translations do not make the distinction, but have versions like “your faith and love that you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints.” Secondly, the phrase “in the Lord Jesus” is not included in some old and reliable codices and manuscripts³⁶³. This would make the reading even more problematic, since with a translation of “faith in” it would become the only instance in the New Testament in which faith in the saints is mentioned as a concept. Given these considerations, the only translation that would circumvent these issues and at the same time would be applicable to “the Lord Jesus” and “to all the saints” alike, is a translation such as “your faithfulness towards the Lord Jesus and all the saints.” With this, we are back in the domain of the mercy motto, with *pistis* the semantic equivalent of the Hebrew *’emet*, signifying dependability, steadfastness, reliability, trustworthiness. Faithfulness towards the saints is not a notion alien to the New Testament: the writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers in chapter 12 to remember the “cloud of witnesses” and therefore to run the race with perseverance and not to be defeatist or fainthearted, in other words, not to “let them down”³⁶⁴. Furthermore, the first word in the word-pair, *agapê*, readily lends itself as translation of the Hebrew *hesed*³⁶⁵. The phrase in Philemon 1:5 could therefore be translated as “hearing about your love and the faithfulness which you have towards the Lord Jesus and all the saints”, thereby recapitulating the last phrase of the mercy motto, *hesed w’emet*, here applied to a human³⁶⁶. If the above line of reasoning is tenable, it would mean that the concept of the mercy motto finds expression even in a document of small format (a letter consisting of 25 verses).

³⁶³ E.g. Codex Sinaiticus (א). The codices and papyri which contain this phrase are A, C, D, 048, 0278 and 33 pc; Bauer-Aland, *Greek-English NT* 561.

³⁶⁴ As an aside, it could be mentioned that the previous chapter (ch.11) is one of the *loci* where the issue of duality between *pistis* as “faith” and *pistis* as “faithfulness” could be posited.

³⁶⁵ Just as it is occasionally used in the LXX as translation of the Hebrew *vrhm*; *ThDOT*, vol. 13, “rhm” 439. In the Hellenic period, *hesed* and *agapê* gradually became semantically more closely-related terms, just like *hesed* and *rah^a mîm*: “In the rabbis *hesed* is a term for the act of love...”, Bultmann, *ThDNT*, vol.II, “ἐλεος” 481. Also cf. his comments on *vrhm*, art.cit. 480-481.

³⁶⁶ In the following chapters, the usage of the mercy motto referring to humans and not to God will be explored.

3.2.1.4 *Eleos kai charis*/ἔλεος καὶ χάρις (Hebrews 4:16)

προσερχώμεθα οὖν μετὰ παρρησίας τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος ἵνα λάβωμεν ἔλεος καὶ χάριν εὕρωμεν

Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with freedom and frankness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace.

The word-pair is suggestive of the first word-pair in the grace formula (*rahûm w^ehannûn*, οἰκτίρμων καὶ ἐλεήμων), in both the Hebrew Bible and the LXX also employed in reversed order)³⁶⁷. Since the Hebrew \sqrt{hnn} is translated by the Greek *ele-* in all but one instance of the full mercy motto³⁶⁸, it is possible that *eleos* serves as the semantic equivalent of \sqrt{hn}/\sqrt{hnn} in the cited verse. However, that would make *charis* the term representing \sqrt{rhm} in this verse, which is unlikely: firstly, \sqrt{rhm} is mostly rendered by *oiktirmôn*, and secondly, *charis* is more closely related to the concept *eleos*; both have much the same signification ([showing] “grace/favour”). This would imply that *eleos* should rather be taken as signifying either “mercy” (\sqrt{rhm}) or “lovingkindness” (\sqrt{hsd}), a suggestion supported by the fact that *eleos* is a versatile term, used at different occasions in the LXX to represent all three Hebrew concepts \sqrt{rhm} , \sqrt{hn}/\sqrt{hnn} and \sqrt{hsd} ³⁶⁹. Consequently, *charis* must be understood as signifying “grace” (\sqrt{hn}). Surmising about possible permutations of word-pairs could carry on indefinitely: one could for example argue that Paul seemed to prefer the term *charis* to *eleos*³⁷⁰, and make the assumption that the author of Hebrews adopted this Pauline usage (which would then be an additional spur to speculating). Perhaps it would be sufficient simply to state that the usage of the word-pair is reminiscent of the mercy motto.

³⁶⁷ In Ex. 34:6 and Pss. 86:15 & 103:8 in the Hebrew, the order of the first pair of epithets is *rahûm* - *hannûn*; in the other 4 occurrences of the full formula it is *hannûn* - *rahûm*. In the LXX, the order is *oiktirmôn* - *eleêmôn* in Ex. 34:6 and the 3 Psalms, and *eleêmôn* - *oiktirmôn* in Joel, Jonah and Nehemiah. It is thus only in Ps. 145:8 in which there is a “cross-match” (or “mismatch”), with *oiktirmôn* used to represent *hannûn*, and *eleêmôn* to represent *rahûm*.

³⁶⁸ As previously mentioned, this “exception” may simply be a matter of the LXX having retained the standard order of the word-pair in Ps. 86:15 (unlike the Hebrew original), so that one should “cross-pair” the two Greek terms with the two Hebrew terms. This would mean that *eleos* is still the translation of \sqrt{hnn} , and not by exception of \sqrt{rhm} .

³⁶⁹ In the LXX version of the mercy motto, *ele-* is used for both the second epithet *hannûn* (ἐλεήμων), as well as for the last epithet *rah-hesed* (πολυέλεος). *Eleos* is used 6 times in the LXX as translation of the Hebrew *rah^amîm*, and also occasionally for the verb *rāham*, cf. *ThDNT*, art.cit. 479.

³⁷⁰ Cf. Cilliers Breytenbach, “‘Charis’ and ‘Eleos’ in Paul’s Letter to the Romans”, in *Grace, Reconciliation, Concord*, SNT 135 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010) 207-238; Gillis Albert Petersson Wetter, “Charis. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des ältesten Christentums”, *Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament (UNT)*, Hans Windisch, ed., Heft 5 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1913) 1-224; Joseph Wobbe, “Der Charis-Gedanke bei Paulus”, *Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen*, Max Meinertz, ed., Band XIII:3 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1932) 1-102 and John M.G. Barclay, *Paul & the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015).

3.2.1.5 *Alêtheia kai agapê/ἀλήθεια καὶ ἀγάπη* (2 John 3)

χάρις ἔλεος εἰρήνη παρὰ θεοῦ πατρός καὶ παρὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρός
ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the father, in truth and love.

There is a likelihood that the word-pair *alêtheia kai agapê* (in the Dative) represents the last part of the mercy formula, *hesed w'emet*. As noted before, *eleos* is often used as Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *hesed*, as is *agapê* (although to a lesser extent). If one takes the conceptual step of positing that the Hebrew concept *hesed* lies behind the Greek *agapê*, then it follows logically that *alêtheia* is the equivalent of *'emet*, complementing the epithet *hesed w'emet* of the mercy motto. The relationship between the Hebrew and Greek terms *'emet* and *alêtheia* received discussion under point 2.1.2; although both the notion of “truth” and “trustworthiness” is inherent in the Hebrew term, and would be grasped as such by a Hebraic mind, this ambivalent association is not present to the same degree in the Greek abstract noun “truth”. In order to preserve the double meaning of the Hebrew, it would be better to translate the Greek by using two terms. The matter becomes even more pertinent when one considers that both notions inhering the term are operative in this short epistle: firstly, there are phrases such as “all who know the truth” (πάντες οἱ ἐγνώκότες τὴν ἀλήθειαν, 2 John 1) and “the teaching/doctrine of Christ” (ἡ διδασχὴ τοῦ Χριστοῦ; twice in Dative in verse 9, once in Accusative in verse 10) which clearly utilise *alêtheia* as a concept implying “knowledge/belief”. Secondly, and on the other hand, from exhortations to the “lady and her children”, such as not to lose what they worked for (verse 8) and to abide in the teaching of Christ (verse 9), it becomes evident that an onus rests on them to remain faithful and steadfast against the deceivers and the antichrist. This means that translating verse 4 as “walking/living in the truth”, “following the truth” or “obeying the truth” may not do proper justice to the Greek περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ. It may be better to set the phrase against an Old Testament background in order to imbue it with a less “abstract” meaning, first of all by adducing the double meaning inherent in the epithet *'emet* of the grace motto, and secondly by calling to mind that the Hebrew equivalent for “walking”/“the way” etc. is *ḥdrk* which denotes a “way of living”. Psalm 119:30a reads “I have chosen the way of faithfulness/truth” (בְּחַרְתִּי דֶּרֶךְ אֱמֻנָה; LXX ὁδὸν ἀληθείας ἡρετισάμην). This notion is continued in the New Testament: the earliest Christians likewise called their faith “The Way”³⁷¹. Additionally, in Acts 13:10, Paul speaks about “the straight paths of the Lord” (τὰς ὁδοὺς τοῦ κυρίου τὰς εὐθείας); *eutheia* also has the

³⁷¹ Acts 9:2, 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, 24:14, 24:7. Also cf. Shepherd Hermas Man.III.4: ἐν ἀληθείᾳ πορεύεσθαι, “to have walked in truth/sincerity/fidelity”.

figurative meaning of “(up)right/straightforward/genuine” in the sense of “reliable/faithful”, terms which would be more in harmony with the meaning of *’emûnah* in Psalm 119:30 than “straight”. The same considerations are relevant to the usage of *alêtheia* in the phrase ἡ ὁδὸς τῆς ἀληθείας in 2 Peter 2:2 which is a direct equivalent of Psalm 119:30; one might suppose that the author’s choice of *alêtheia* was also the result of an “either-or” dilemma, and that he in the event opted for a term which does more justice to the concept of “truth” than to the concept of “trustworthiness”³⁷². Modern-day translations likewise waver between “faithful” and “true”. An alternative translation of the phrase in 2 John 4 could be “being faithful/trustworthy”. If one now returns to the word-pair in 2 John 3, it is noticeable that the vast majority of the translations that were consulted render the Greek *alêtheia* as “truth”, regardless of the language³⁷³. Only two translations employed the concept of “faithfulness” or “sincerity”³⁷⁴. It is intimidating to hazard an alternative translation, but again, the contention must be reiterated that the Hebrew *’emet* is not rendered adequately enough by the concept “truth” alone, regardless of the language³⁷⁵. Again, the best way to resolve this terminological dilemma might be to paraphrase *alêtheia* using two words, and therefore to translate ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ as “in truth and constancy, and love.”

3.2.1.6 *Ploutos, perisseuô, perisseia, plousios, plêroô, πολυ/πλοῦτος,*

περισεύω, περισσεία, πλούσιος, πληρόω, πολύ, πλουσίως (Romans 2:4, 5:15, 5:17, Ephesians 1:7, 2:4, 2:7, 3:8, Philippians 4:19, James 5:11, 1 Peter 1:3, Titus 3:6)

There is one notion featuring in some neotestamentical epistles which is represented by single but varying words or combinations of words (as listed above), and which is a fundamental tenet of the Jewish faith. This is the notion of “abundance/richness/fulness”. In this regard, Cilliers Breytenbach gives the following comment: “...the theological base of his [Paul’s] language of grace lies in the Jewish trust in the abundance of God’s mercy”³⁷⁶. The notion is strongly suggestive of the last characteristic ascribed to God in the mercy motto, namely *rab-hesed*, which is variously translated as “full of/filled with/abundant in/rich in lovingkindness”. A

³⁷² It must be granted that to a Hellenic Jew, the Greek term might still have carried the full ambivalent meaning inherent in the Hebrew *’emet*. However, it cannot be granted that the term in Greek or other languages would have retained this meaning as time elapsed.

³⁷³ 106 of the 108 translations, yielding a frequency of 98%.

³⁷⁴ “Sincerity”: Amplified Bible, Classic Edition and J.B. Phillips New Testament. Cf. biblegateway.com for Bible versions.

³⁷⁵ As a matter of interest, it may be pointed out that in Yiddish (and also modern Hebrew), the Biblical term has seemingly also lost some of its significance: *Emes*, the contemporary/vernacular version of *’emet*, (only) signifies “truth” (unless it is accepted that the modern Jewish mind still grasps the concept of “true”, as well as its correlate “trustworthy” as a single concept when encountering the word *Emet/Emes*.)

³⁷⁶ Breytenbach, “Charis” 248. Also cf. his comment on p.225: “But the notion behind this language is clearly rooted in the Israelite-Jewish tradition of the abundance of God’s mercy towards the sinner”.

survey of the Old Testament confirms the statement by Breytenbach that for Israel, this conception was central to their belief. In the Old Testament, the notion was expressed by the terms *rab*, *rabbîm* and *gadôl* joined to words such as “goodness”, “mercy” and “mercies”³⁷⁷. In the LXX, equivalents are πολὺς, τὸ πλῆθος, πληθύνω, μέγα and μεγαλύνω, joined to the concepts *chrêstotês* (“goodness”), *eleos* (“grace”) and *oiktirmoi* (“mercies”) ³⁷⁸.

For the sake of comprehensiveness, the cited verses will be listed; reading them makes a compelling case that they are allusions to Old Testament and/or LXX phraseology, and therefore also direct or indirect allusions to the mercy motto³⁷⁹.

Table 3.1: Verses denoting “fulness/greatness”

Romans 2:4	ἡ τοῦ πλούτου τῆς χρηστότητος αὐτοῦ
Romans 5:15	ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ...ἐπερίσσευσεν
Romans 5:17	τὴν περισσείαν τῆς χάριτος
Ephesians 1:7	τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ
Ephesians 2:4	ὁ δὲ θεὸς πλούσιος ὢν ἐλέει
Ephesians 3:8	τὸ ἀνεξιχνίαστον πλοῦτος τοῦ Χριστοῦ
Philippians 4:19	τὸ πλοῦτος αὐτοῦ [=τοῦ θεοῦ]
James 5:11	πολύσπλαγχνός ἐστιν ὁ κύριος
1 Peter 1:3	τὸ πολὺ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος

From the above it can be seen that the designations *eleos* and *charis* (both denoting “grace/mercy”) seem to be interchangeable, both serving as semantic equivalents to the Hebrew *hesed*. The other term which seems to represent the Hebrew concept *hesed* is *chrêstotês* “goodness/kindness” (Romans 2:4)³⁸⁰. The *hapaxlegomenon* in James 5:11, *polusplangchnos*, will be discussed in a next chapter. Both this term and the phrase *to polu autou eleos* in 1 Peter 1:3³⁸¹ may have their precedent in the LXX version of Psalm 86:5 (LXX 85:5): σύ κύριε χρηστὸς καὶ ἐπιεικὴς καὶ πολυέλεος. A final observation is that in these terms

³⁷⁷ Some examples are מְרַבֵּי רַחֲמֶיךָ (“[your] many/abundant mercies” 2 Sam.4:14, 1 Chr.21:13, Neh.9:7, 19, 28, 31, Lam.3:32, Dan.9:18e), רַב־טוֹב לִי דָגְלֶךָ (“in your great goodness”, Neh.9:19,5,35). There are numerous such instances in the Psalms; the present author found 18.

³⁷⁸ E.g. Pss.5:7, 31:19, 36:7, 51:1, 57:10.

³⁷⁹ There are also several instances of a similar usage in other early-Jewish works, e.g. Prayer Man. 1:6 ἀμέτρητόν...τὸ ἔλεος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας σου, 1:7b κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῆς χρηστότητός σου...καὶ τῷ πλήθει τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν σου, 1:14 τὸ πολὺ ἔλεός σου; Bar. 2:27 πάντα οἰκτιρμόν σου τὸν μέγαν; Prayer of Azar. 3:18 τὸ πλῆθος τοῦ ἐλέους σου; Sir.16:12 πολὺς ὁ ἔλεγχος αὐτοῦ, 17:29 ὡς μεγάλη ἡ ἐλεημοσύνη τοῦ Κυρίου, 18:12 ἐπλήθυσε τὸν ἐξίλασμόν αὐτοῦ, 51:3 τὸ πλῆθος ἐλέους...σου and Ps. Sol. 18:1 ἡ χρηστότης σου μετα δοματοῦ πλουσιοῦ. 1 Clem. 18:2 κατὰ τὸ μέγα ἔλεός σου καὶ κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν σου, and 20:11 ὑπερεκπερισσῶς δὲ ἡμᾶς τοὺς προσπεφευγότας τοῖς οἰκτιρμοῖς αὐτοῦ are 2 patristic Christian examples.

³⁸⁰ This verse will receive separate attention under subsection 3.2.2.2.

³⁸¹ Regarding which some scholars prefer the version *polusplangchnos*; cf. Breytenbach, “Der einzige Gott” 51, fn.70. However, the textual evidence for this variant is not clear; cf. Bauer-Aland, Greek-English NT 598-599.

of abundance and boundlessness, the theme of the universality of God's grace and lovingkindness also finds development. This universalist and inclusivist inclination of God's *hesed* will receive further attention in later chapters.

3.2.2 Word groups (*Matthew 23:23, Romans 2:4*)

3.2.2.1 τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου τὴν κρίσιν καὶ τὸ ἔλεος καὶ τὴν πίστιν (*Matthew 23:23*) *The more serious matters of the Law: justice and mercy and [faith]*³⁸²

It is almost certain that the second and third terms in the quotation is an allusion to the last item in the mercy motto, *hesed w^e'emet*. The Hebrew *תְּחִינָה* is also elsewhere in Matthew rendered as *eleos* (9:13, 12:7, in both cases citing Hosea 6:6, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice", *וְלֹא תַחֲבֹתִי*)³⁸³. As a consequence, this means that *pistis* is the equivalent of the Hebrew *'emet*, the designation which complements the notion of *hesed* as "lovingkindness/goodness/love" which is "steadfast/constant". From a translational point of view, it is interesting that Matthew did not opt for the other Greek term which is sometimes used to render the Hebrew *'emet*, namely *alêtheia*; given his choice, it may not be too far-fetched to infer that he found the Greek concept of "truth" inadequate to convey the meaning of *'emet*³⁸⁴. Furthermore: to translate Matthew's *pistis* adequately into a modern language, it first has to be placed and understood within its Old Testament matrix or within the matrix of the mercy motto: translations such as "faith" are too abstract and "Greek"; behind the Greek term lies the Hebrew concept of *'emûnah/'emet*, denoting attitudes and actions which are "truthful and trustworthy", not a conceptual religious "belief". A feasible translation of the entire phrase would thus be the following: "just judgement, mercy and faithfulness"³⁸⁵.

³⁸² The translation of *pistis* by "faith" will be reconsidered.

³⁸³ Also see Bultmann, "ἔλεος", *ThDNT*, vol.II 482.

³⁸⁴ It was already posited under subsections 3.2.1.1 and 3.2.1.2 that the notion of *alêtheia* might not be adequate to represent the full semantic content of the Hebrew *'emet*.

³⁸⁵ Although *krisis* is not a term implied in the mercy motto, the following comments could be given for the sake of comprehensiveness: it is a rendering of the Hebrew *mishpat* and the usual translation in the LXX. A "compendium" of this treatment is found in Deuteronomy 17:8-12 where the Hebrew term appears three times and a cognate, ("judge", *שָׁפַט*) twice. All five instances are translated by the Greek *κρίσις* "judgement" or *κριτής* "judge". The term *mishpat* in Isaiah 42:1&3 is also translated by *krisis* in the LXX and in the quotation of the two verses in Mt. 1:18 & 20.

3.2.2.2 ἡ τοῦ πλούτου τῆς χρηστότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀνοχῆς

καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας καταφρονεῖς ἀγνοῶν ὅτι τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς μετάνοιαν σε ἄγει (Romans 2:4)

Do you disdain the abundance of his goodness and forbearance and patience, not realising that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

The appearance of the terms “abundance/richness”, “forbearance” and “patience” is strongly reminiscent of the epithets used in second part of the mercy formula, namely *’erek ’appayim w^erab-ḥesed*/μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος. The combination of πλοῦτος and χρηστότης, as is the case with the two Hebrew terms *rab* and *ḥesed*, is one clue. Also, *chrēstotēs* and *chrēston* are cognates; the usage in early Jewish literature of *chrēstos* instead of *eleos* in the mercy motto is recorded, for example in the Wisdom of Solomon 15:1³⁸⁶. Paul uses the term *chrēstotēs* twice more in Romans; in Romans 3:12 referring to humans³⁸⁷ and in 11:22 again referring to God³⁸⁸. It occurs five more times in the New Testament; like the Hebrew concept *ḥesed*, it is applied to God and to humans³⁸⁹. *Chrēstos* appears even more seldom in the New Testament; only in two other passages does it refer to God³⁹⁰. If it is assumed that *chrēstotēs* was used by Paul as substitute for the term “eleos” in *polueleos*, it is further possible to surmise that its cognate *χρηστός*, the fourth characteristic of God mentioned in this verse, is a replacement term for the concept *eleos/eleēmōn* used in the first word-pair of the mercy motto. It was already pointed out in subsection 2.1.4 that Paul seems to avoid the usage of the “eleos-terminology”³⁹¹; the usage here may be another example of Paul’s preference for alternative terms for *eleos*³⁹². There are also some inter- and intratextual indicators that the mercy motto is the matrix for Paul’s argument in this pericope: in Exodus 34:6, the quotation of the mercy motto is followed by in verse 7 by the mention of God’s punishment of the guilty³⁹³. Likewise, Paul’s reference to God’s goodness and kindness is followed by intimations of God’s wrath, judgement and fury³⁹⁴. On reading this pericope, one comes under the impression that to Paul

³⁸⁶ Σὺ δὲ ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν χρηστὸς καὶ ἀληθής, μακρόθυμος καὶ ἐν ἐλέει διοικῶν τὰ πάντα.

³⁸⁷ “Nobody does good”, οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ποιῶν χρηστότητα.

³⁸⁸ “See the goodness and the severity of God”, ἴδε οὖν χρηστότητα καὶ ἀποτομίαν θεοῦ.

³⁸⁹ Applied to God: Eph. 2:7, Tit. 3:4; applied to humans: 2 Cor. 6:6, Gal. 5:22, Col. 3:12. For an interesting work on this topic, see Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2011).

³⁹⁰ Lk. 6:35 and 1 Pet. 2:3 (a quotation of the LXX Ps. 33:9). *Chrēstos* appears seven times in the NT.

³⁹¹ His usage of the term in the pericope Rom. 9:14-18 could be ascribed to the fact that it is based on the quotation of Ex.33:19 (LXX ἐλεήσω ὃν ἂν ἐλεῶ καὶ οἰκτιρήσω ὃν ἂν οἰκτίρω).

³⁹² Studies dealing with this topic have been mentioned under footnote 39.

³⁹³ LXX οὐ καθαρῶς τὸν ἔνοχον ἐπάγων ἀνομίας πατέρων κ.τ.λ.

³⁹⁴ ὀργὴν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς, Rom.2:5; ὀργὴ καὶ θυμός, Rom.2:8. Another interesting parallel between the pericope in Romans and Ex.34:7 is the concept of “doing mercy” (ποιῶν ἔλεος, of God, Ex.34:7) and “doing good/good deeds” (ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ, Rom.2:7 and τῷ ἐργαζομένῳ τὸ ἀγαθόν, Rom 2:10; both of the righteous), although it may be coincidence.

(the zealous Jew who sat at the feet of Gamaliel) the mercy motto is his instinctual theological frame of reference.

3.2.2.3 σὺ δὲ παρηκολούθησάς μου τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ἀγωγῇ τῇ προθέσει τῇ πίστει
τῇ μακροθυμίᾳ τῇ ἀγάπῃ τῇ ὑπομονῇ (2 Timothy 3:10)

You have followed me in teaching, conduct, purpose, [faith], patience, love, steadfastness.

We find a plethora of seven attitudes and activities of Paul listed here in a single verse³⁹⁵. It could be stated as a hypothesis that, the greater the number of words contained in a word-group, the lesser the degree of attraction any single word(s) similar to the mercy motto will exert with regard to the formula. The “gravitational forces” between the formula and related concepts in the word-group are diluted or dissipated to a certain degree. The fewer the words, the greater the brevity and the effect of the words. The more the words, the less impact each single word has. It is also noteworthy that the author of the epistles to Timothy and Titus³⁹⁶ shows a fondness for groupings of such terms, for example *agapê*, *agathê* and *pistis* (1 Tim. 1:5), *agapê*, *pistis* and *agneia* (1 Tim. 4:12), *pistis*, *agapê* and *hupomonê* (1 Tim. 6:11), *pistis*, *agapê* and *eirênê* (2 Tim. 2:22) and *pistis*, *agapê* and *hupomonê* (Titus 2:2)³⁹⁷. With these considerations in mind, the discussion can continue. Words of interest for the present study are τῇ πίστει, τῇ μακροθυμίᾳ, τῇ ἀγάπῃ and τῇ ὑπομονῇ. Regarding the first term, *pistis*, one will note that it is a term that with its cognate *pistos* is often employed in the epistles to Timothy and Titus³⁹⁸. In several places, it unambiguously has the meaning of “faithful/trustworthy” and not of “faith/belief”, for example in the case of the constant refrain πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, “the saying is sure/the word is reliable”³⁹⁹, and when it refers to the faithfulness of Christ (2 Tim.2:13)⁴⁰⁰ or of Paul (1 Tim.1:12). This usage points to the Hebrew concept *’emet*; there is no reason not to translate *pistis* in the cited verse as “faithfulness/trustworthiness”, giving it a more concrete orientation having to do with one’s conduct, rather than the more abstract concept “faith/belief”. If this is the case, *pistis* may be taken as the complement of *agapê*, thereby conveying the last

³⁹⁵ This list is continued in the next verse with the mention of two more experiences: Paul’s persecutions (διωγμοί) and his sufferings (πάθημα).

³⁹⁶ Assuming that they were not written by Paul; therefore also called the “deutero-Pauline” epistles; see e.g. Breytenbach, “Charis” 39, fn. 9.

³⁹⁷ There are also several instances of word-pairs in which *pistis* is combined with *alêtheia* (1 Tim.2:7), *agapê* (1 Tim.1:14, 2:15, 2 Tim.1:13, ditto 1 Thess.3:6, 5:8, 2 Thess.1:3, Philem.1:5) or *agathê* (2 Tim.1:19).

³⁹⁸ With the total number of times used in the NT in brackets: *Pistis* 34X (243), *pistos* 16X (67) in various inflections.

³⁹⁹ Six times: 1 Tim.1:15, 3:1, 4:9, 2 Tim.2:11, Titus 1:9, 3:8.

⁴⁰⁰ Also cf. 2 Thess.3:3 πιστὸς δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ κύριος, “The Lord is faithful.”

element of the mercy motto, namely *hesed w^eemet*⁴⁰¹. It would not be unusual to represent the Hebrew “lovingkindness” or “goodness” (*hesed*) with the Greek term for “(divine) love”, namely *agapê*. This supposition is further strengthened by the presence of *makrothumia*, another epithet of the mercy motto. The last item in verse 10, *hupomonê* (“patient perseverance/steadfastness”) may be taken as throwing more light on both the term *pistis* as well as *makrothumia*. Although it cannot be stated with much certainty, it does appear as though the cited verse may be suggestive of the mercy motto. At the very least, it is an example of a religious background in which notions such as those contained in the mercy motto are used. Furthermore, one could observe that concepts contained in the mercy motto shed some light on the meaning of their Greek counterparts, and that these Hebrew concepts should be taken into account when one is occupied with exegetical and translational matters⁴⁰².

3.2.3 Pericopes (Ephesians 2:1-10, 1 Timothy 1:12-17, Titus 3: 4-8a)

Some of the terms occurring in these two pericopes have already received discussion in previous sections⁴⁰³. Complementary observations regarding these two pericopes will now be presented.

3.2.3.1 Ephesians 2:1-10 (πλούσιος ἐν ἐλέει, τὴν πολλὴν ἀγάπην αὐτοῦ, ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, χάριτί, τὸ ὑπερβάλλον πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ, ἐν χρηστότητι, χάριτί, διὰ πίστεως)

When studying this veritable *florilegium* of descriptions of God’s goodness and kindness, one comes to the conclusion that most of these terms are denotations of the Hebrew *rab-hesed*. The main consideration is the use of *plousios*, *pollê* and *ploutos*, the last term preceded by the literally hyperbolic term *hyperballon*, all four of which are terms that are evocative of the Hebrew *rab*. Furthermore: the terms which are qualified by these adjectival and nominal designations of “abundance/richness/fulness”, namely *eleos*, *agapê* and *charis*, are terms which in the LXX are sometimes used to represent the Hebrew concept *hesed*. There is a likelihood that the nouns employed singly, namely *charis* in verse 5 and *chrêstotês* in verse 7, also represent the Hebrew “lovingkindness”. It could be countered that this leads to a surfeit of terms all indicating the same concept, but it seems as though this hyperbolic presentation may be precisely the intention of Paul, namely creating an overflowing verbal equivalent of the

⁴⁰¹ It may be advisable again to mention that the phrase *hesed w^eemet* in the OT does not only occur within the mercy motto, but is one of the *ritornelli* of the OT, occurring 30 times as an alone-standing motto; see ch.2, subsection 2.4, p.12-13.

⁴⁰² Addendum: an interesting word group in which the same, as well as equivalent concepts than those listed in the grace motto are used, is found in the Epistle to Diognetus VIII.8: χρηστός καὶ ἀγαθός καὶ ἀόργητος καὶ ἀληθής, καὶ μόνος ἀγαθός ἐστιν. In the previous verse, God’s *makrothumia* is also listed. In the quoted verse, *aorgêtos* (“free from anger”) is used as equivalent for *makrothumia*.

⁴⁰³ Eph.2:4 in subsection 2.1.6, 1 Tim.1:12 in subsection 2.2.3, and 1 Tim.1:15 in subsection 2.1.2.

abundant and bountiful goodness of God. One may adduce another argument in support of this contention: in chapter 2, in the discussion of the divine epithet *rab-ḥesed*, it was pointed out that it was often understood in the Old Testament and also by Old Testament scholars as being the summary and sum total of all the beneficent dealings of God⁴⁰⁴. Here again, also the universality and limitlessness of God's *ḥesed* are hinted at. We may take this pericope as a eulogy on the endless and boundless goodness and kindness of God.

3.2.3.2 1 Timothy 1:12-17 (πιστόν, ἡλεήθην, χάρις, πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης, πιστὸς, ἡλεήθην, μακροθυμίαν)

As a matter of interest, it could be noted that the inflection of the verb ἐλέαω in the Aorist Passive (ἡλεήθην) that occurs twice in this passage is unusual; the Aorist Passive tense is only used in two other verses in the New Testament⁴⁰⁵. *Piston* (Accusative) in verse 12 and *pistos* (Nominative) in verse 15 both have the meaning of “faithful/trustworthy” and are equivalents to the Hebrew concept of *’emet/’emûnah*. They could thus be perceived of as an echo of the last item of the mercy motto as it appears in its full form in Exodus 34:6 and Psalm 86:15. *Charis* seems like the equivalent for *ḥesed*, a concept already hinted at in the Greek parallels of the concept *’emet* (namely *piston/pistos*). It was already argued in subsection 3.2.1.2 that a more sufficient translation for *pisteôs* in verse 14 may well be “[with the] faithfulness”, so that verse 14b could be translated as “the faithfulness and love that are in Christ Jesus” or simply as “Christ Jesus’ faithfulness and love”. This supposition is bolstered by the appearance of the terms “received mercy” in verse 13 (repeated in verse 16) and “grace that overflowed” in verse 14, appearances which sound like an echo of the epithets *rahûm* or *ḥannûn* (*eleos* or *oiktirmos*) and [*rab*]ḥesed ([*polu*]eleos) of the mercy motto. In this pericope, Paul words his gratitude to God for the mercy, grace and love which he had received; there is no better summary of God’s merciful character and conduct than the mercy motto.

3.2.3.3 Titus 3: 4-8α (χρηστότης, φιланθρωπία, ἔλεος, πλουσίως, χάριτι, πιστὸς)

The term *filanthrôpia* only occurs twice in the New Testament: the other occurrence is in Acts 28:2 where it indicates the kindness shown to Paul and the other survivors of the shipwreck by the inhabitants of the island Malta. In this pericope, which has some characteristics of a eulogy or hymn, the terms *chrêstotês* and *filanthrôpia* may be understood as a *hendiadys*, together evoking the Old Testament notion of God’s lovingkindness towards humankind as expressed in the mercy motto and in other short *ritornelli* in the Old Testament. As was the case in Ephesians 2:1-10 (and also to some extent in 1 Timothy 1:12-17) it seems as though there is an almost pleonastic “stacking” of terms all suggesting the concept of God’s *ḥesed*.

⁴⁰⁴ Ch.2, section 2.4, p.13.

⁴⁰⁵ 2 Cor. 4:1 (ἡλεήθημεν) and Rom. 11:30 (ἡλεήθητε).

The only term which is employed in another sense, not referring to God's goodness, is *pistos* in the adage "The saying is sure"/"The word is reliable" in verse 8b. This is a very apt conclusion of the pericope, which is another type of homily on God's constant and faithful lovingkindness: the notion of *pistos*, implying trustworthiness and fidelity, is now applied to the notion of God's constant goodness and kindness itself.

3.3 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, a methodology was suggested in order to determine whether the mercy motto may be present in the New Testament, albeit on a covert level. Word-pairs, word groups, pericopes and even some occurrences of a single word possibly alluding to the grace motto were studied. Although not all the cited instances are equally susceptible of proof that they are indeed echoes of the mercy motto, a conviction nevertheless grew during the investigation that many of these phrases or passages are permeated with the mercy motto. One could add that it is not even a requirement to prove that the original authors intended such allusions; in the final instance the issue is decided in terms of the intra- and intertextual correspondences between New Testament wordings and the mercy motto that are discerned within the canon of Scripture as it stands. Given the above discussion, one must furthermore conclude that the degree in which the mercy motto shaped the thought of neotestamentical authors has not yet been adequately researched. There are a few scholars who have pointed out the affinity between the diction of the mercy motto and the speech of New Testament authors such as Paul; Cilliers Breytenbach points out the central role that the mercy motto played even in later, Jewish-Hellenistic times⁴⁰⁶, the adoption of this formula in James 5:11 and 1 Peter 1:3⁴⁰⁷, and the influence that it had on Pauline thought in Romans: "Der Römerbrief zeigt nun, das Paulus auch mit der Sprache der Gnadenformel vertraut war"⁴⁰⁸.

The paucity of scholarly work regarding this topic is once again a confirmation of one of the contentions of this study, namely that the mercy motto has not enjoyed the reception within theological research (in this case pertaining to New Testament theology) that it deserves. It became evident that at the very least, it could be employed as a tool in translation. Added to this *minimum*, the role that the mercy motto played in the shaping of New Testamentic thought, that is, within the New Testament itself, deserves much greater attention. Only then would it become possible for the mercy motto to be adopted to a greater degree as an exegetical and hermeneutical tool within New Testament studies. Thus far, and in this respect, its reception has been lacking.

⁴⁰⁶ Breytenbach, *Der einzige Gott* 49-50.

⁴⁰⁷ Art.cit. 51.

⁴⁰⁸ Art.cit. 53.

Chapter 4:

Antecedents to the usage of σπλάγχνα/σπλαγχνίζομαι in the New Testament

4.1 Σπλάγχνα and σπλαγχνίζομαι in the New Testament⁴⁰⁹

In the previous chapter, the *modus operandi* for an attempt to establish the presence of the mercy motto in the New Testament was discussed. In short, this methodology entailed identifying certain terms or phrases that have a strong referential value with respect to the grace formula (“loaded” terms/phrases such as σπλαγχνίζομαι/Κύριε ἐλέησόν), word-pairs and word groups that contain some of the terms of the grace motto (or their synonyms), terms which do not originate in the grace motto, but nevertheless evoke the divine deed dimension, and lastly entire pericopes in which the mercy motto might seem to be mustered. A start was made with these categories chapter 3. The term which will henceforth receive attention is *splangchn-* in its various declensions and conjugations.

It is the contention of this study that the Greek terms σπλαγχνίζομαι/σπλάγχνα and their inflections are of key importance to any hermeneutics or theology of the New Testament and of a “whole-Bible” theology. Firstly, the neotestamentical Greek concepts derived from the root σπλάγχν- are the closest semantical equivalents to the Hebrew *ṣṣḥm*, which is a central concept in the Old Testament. The only other possible alternative terms to σπλάγχν- would

⁴⁰⁹ A short discussion of the transliteration of the Greek σπλάγχνα, σπλαγχνίζομαι, etc. must be given here. The standard transliteration is *splanchna*, *splanchnizomai* etc. However, the present author would like to submit the following considerations with a view to a modified transliteration. In the conventional transliteration, the Greek *gamma* (γ) is represented by “n”, which is an alveolar nasal consonant (formed by the tip of the tongue placed at the front ridge of the palate behind the upper front teeth). The following phonological reservations could however be tendered regarding this representation: firstly, if the alveolar nasal consonant “n” (phonetic symbol [n]) is followed by a velar or uvular stop/plosive (such as “k” or “g”, phonetic symbols [k], [g]), or a nasal or fricative consonant (such as “ng” and “χ”/“h”, [ɣ]/[x]/[χ]), the formation of the “n” moves backwards in the mouth and becomes the nasal velar “ng” [ŋ], which means that in the transliteration itself (*splanchnizomai*), the “n” preceding “ch” (representing the Greek *chi*) would not be pronounced as “n”, but as “ng” – so why not transliterate it thus? An analogous example is when the prefix συν is added to χαίρω: the ν becomes a [ŋ] (συνχαίρει). Secondly, in the Greek σπλάγχν-, we have a *gamma* (γ) preceding the *chi* (χ), in which case the same phonetic “shift” applies: the [g] of *gamma* is a velar consonant, in any case formed further back in the mouth, in the same place and with the same placement of the tongue than “ng” [ŋ]. From a phonetic or phonological point of view, there is little to support a view that the *gamma* would move forward in the mouth under influence of the following *chi* to be pronounced as “n” [n] – rather, the velar plosive or stop “g”/γ [g] simply becomes the velar nasal ng [ŋ], producing the same result than in the case of the transliteration itself. Numerous similar phonetic occurrences in Greek could be given; random examples are ἄγγελος, ἐγκρατεία, συγχαρίζονται and ἤλεγξε. A similar but forward phonetic shift occurs when e.g. πάσχει receives the prefix συν: under the influence of the bilabial plosive π, the ν of συν becomes the bilabial μ (συνμιάσχει). The present author thus respectfully submits the modified transliteration of *splangchnizomai* for use in this study.

be οἰκτίρμων or ἐλεήμων (also constituting the first and second elements of the mercy motto⁴¹⁰) and their inflections. However, it is only σπλάγχχν- which has the potentiality to represent the full spectrum of semantical values inhering the Hebrew term: both the Greek and the Hebrew terms could have a literal, “first-level” meaning denoting the inner organs (ἰσχυρ *rehem*/ἰσχυ *raham*: womb/uterus; σπλάγχχνα: innards, intestines; literally the “spleen”⁴¹¹), a “first-level”, figurative meaning (“[motherly] feeling”, “affections/affectionate”, “emotions/emotional”) or a “second-level”, intensified figurative meaning (“stirrings of compassion”, “heartfelt pity”), applied to a human, and fourthly, the same attitude or disposition transposed to a higher plane, namely attributed to God (a conceptual “third level” of meaning). This is the first indication of the uniqueness of the Greek term. In the New Testament, the 11 occurrences of the *noun* (τά) σπλάγχχνα⁴¹² and its declensions are not as significant for the present study as are the 12 instances of the *verb* σπλαγχνίζομαι and its various conjugations. This will become evident through the course of the discussion; for now it would suffice to mention that usually, the *noun* is either used in a literal sense⁴¹³, in a “first-level” figurative sense⁴¹⁴, and only possibly in a “second-level” figurative sense⁴¹⁵, whereas the *verb* in its different inflections always and invariably refers to the third dimension, that of “being deeply moved by pity”/“stirred to heartfelt compassion” and is applied to humans and to God. Moreover, these verbal inflections of σπλάγχχν-, namely σπλαγχνίζομαι⁴¹⁶, ἐσπλαγχνίσθη⁴¹⁷ and σπλαγχνισθεῖς⁴¹⁸ are to be found nowhere else in the New Testament but in the Synoptic Gospels, where it is only used by Jesus or with reference to Jesus. These facts are a further indication of the uniqueness of the term.

4.2 σπλαγχνίζομαι: Pre-history

The usage of *splangchn-* in the New Testament has its antecedents in Hellenistic Jewish writings mainly predating the Common Era, with some writings, or sections of such writings, possibly dating from the first few decades of the Common Era. A suitable *terminus a quo* for any such antecedents would be the inception of the Septuaginta translation in the third century B.C. An apt *terminus ad quem* would be circa 50 A.D., as these decades may be the latest

⁴¹⁰ It could be noted that elsewhere in the LXX, οἰκτίρ- is the preferred translation of *vrhm*.

⁴¹¹ In the LXX, the term μήτρα is usually preferred to σπλάγχχνα when a literal translation of the Hebrew is involved.

⁴¹² Only found in the plural in the NT, never in the singular (to *splangchnon*).

⁴¹³ “Bowels”/“intestines”/“innards”/“guts”; Acts 1:18.

⁴¹⁴ “Heart”, “inner being”, “affections”, “feelings”; 2 Corinthians 6:12, 7:15, Philippians 1:8, Philemon 7, 12, 20 and in 1 John 3:17.

⁴¹⁵ Lk. 1:78, Col. 3:12 and Phil. 2:1. In all three cases, σπλάγχχνα is complemented by ἐλέους/οἰκτιρμοῦ (Genitive Singular) or οἰκτιρμοί (Nominative Plural) which invest σπλάγχχνα with a higher figurative meaning. The conjunction of σπλάγχχνα with such terms will receive attention in the next sections.

⁴¹⁶ Matthew 15:32, Mark 8:2.

⁴¹⁷ Matthew 9:36, 14:14, Mark 6:34, Luke 7:13, 10:33, 15:20.

⁴¹⁸ Matthew 18:27, 20:34, Mark 1:41, 9:22.

possible phase during which the remaining portions of the Hebrew Bible were translated into Greek⁴¹⁹. These early decades of the Common Era also represent the latest possible date of origin of some other Jewish religious writings relevant to this discussion⁴²⁰. Matters of dating will receive attention in the next section.

4.2.1 *The LXX*

For the sake of cogency in the following discussion, some preliminary observations regarding chronology have to be made. One of the consequences of Hellenisation (the process of Greek acculturation to which cultures and societies were subject after Alexander the Great's conquests in the period shortly before 300 BC) was that the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek for the sake of Hellenised Jews (and *metuentes*). Germane to the present discussion is the fact that the translation of the Pentateuch had priority; other parts of the Hebrew Bible, like sections of the wisdom literature, only received attention at a later stage, with the task perhaps only completed during the first decades of the Common Era. The relatively late translation into Greek of the third main *corpus* of the Hebrew Bible, the "writings" (*k^etuvîm*) has some relevance for the two verses from Proverbs (which will be discussed in the next sections).

In the LXX, √σπλαγχν- appears 15 times as noun (always plural), and twice in a verbal guise⁴²¹. Of these 17 instances, only 5 equivalents are found in the original Hebrew; the rest are later additions to the Greek text⁴²². In the case of 14 of the 15 nouns, and one of the two verbal forms, a literal meaning is indicated⁴²³. Thus, in only two instances, namely Proverbs 12:10 (nominal use) and 17:5 (verbal use), is √σπλαγχν- used in a figurative sense, therefore possibly qualifying as forerunner to New Testamental usage.

⁴¹⁹ The process of translating the main body of the Old Testament into Greek was completed circa 250 B.C.; Howard Clark Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (Second Century B.C.). A New Introduction and Translation", *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, James Hamilton Charlesworth, ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983) 777. The completion of the translation only happened much later (at least 200-250 years later).

⁴²⁰ Such as the Testament of Abraham, which probably dates from the second century A.D.; Montague Rhodes James, *The Testament of Abraham* (Cambridge: CUP, 1892) 55.

⁴²¹ Hans-Helmut Esser, "Barmherzigkeit" 57.

⁴²² Helmut Köster, entry "Σπλάγχχον, σπλαγχνίζομαι etc.", *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. VII, Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, eds. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer & Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 550.

⁴²³ For example: *nominal* form in Proverbs 26:22 οὔτοι δὲ τύπτουσιν εἰς ταμίαια σπλάγχων "They [his words] go down deep into your bowels" (Hebrew יְדִי יוֹצֵא יָדָיו, with *vbtn* used in place of *Vrhm*); in *verbal* guise in 2 Maccabees 6:8 τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγωγὴν...ἄγειν καὶ σπλαγχνίζειν "That they [the Jews] follow the same practice, and partake in the offerings" (without Hebrew original).

4.2.1.1 Proverbs 12:10b τὰ δὲ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνελεήμονα (יִגְדְּלֵי מִצְּפָה יִרְכָּא)

“The mercy of the wicked is cruel”⁴²⁴

There are various translations of the pertinent term, which for the purpose of this analysis could be either the Greek or the Hebrew, as $\sqrt{\sigma\pi\lambda\alpha\gamma\chi}$ - and \sqrt{rhm} are the most closely-related concepts in biblical Greek and Hebrew respectively, and both are equally susceptible of either a literal or a figurative interpretation as was already highlighted above. Some translations favour a semantic field which not merely references the “inner being”/“seat of personality”/“feelings”/“sentiments” (which would in terms of the explanation under 4.2.1 have “first-level” figurative meaning), but “mercy”⁴²⁵, “compassion”⁴²⁶ or “tender mercies”⁴²⁷ (which would thus be denotations which reside on a second-level figurative meaning). In a discussion of the Semitic background of the New Testament phrase *en splangchnois*, E.C.B. McLaurin calls Proverbs 12:10 a “key passage” with respect to the meaning of *splangchna* in the New Testament, an observation that could have validity only if the term is accorded the higher-level meaning of “heartfelt pity”, and not merely that of benevolent feelings⁴²⁸. Furthermore, it could be noted that the part of the verse under discussion (12b) is set in contrast to the preceding saying (12a) in a type of antithetical dittography: “The righteous man has pity on [the lives of] his animals” (δίκαιος οἰκτῖρει ψυχὰς κτηνῶν αὐτοῦ) “but the unjust man’s pity is cruel”. On the other hand, this text is unique and atypical in some respects: besides the fact that it would be one of the very few occurrences in the Old Testament in which the term is applied not to God, but to a human being⁴²⁹, it is also the only example in the entire LXX of the *nominal* form of *splangchna* being used figuratively⁴³⁰. The question must be asked whether it does not perhaps constitute a “semantic overload” if the Greek term (and by implication its correspondent Hebrew term) is translated with the meaning of “(inner-felt) mercy” or “(stirrings of) compassion” (second-level figurative), rather than with the less loaded denotation of the “person”/“being”, or of the disposition or psychological state of a human being (first-level figurative). Such a “diluted” translation would in addition be less at variance with the great

⁴²⁴ The relative merits of different translational options will receive discussion below.

⁴²⁵ For example, the English Standard Version (ESV) and New International Revised Version (NIRV).

⁴²⁶ The Complete Jewish Bible (CJB).

⁴²⁷ American Standard Version (ASV), King James Version (KJV) and Modern English Version (MEV).

⁴²⁸ Evan Colin Briarcliffe Maclaurin, “The Semitic Background of Use of ‘En Splangchnois’”, PEQ 103 (London: Office of the Fund, 1971) 42. Köster, “Σπλάγχων” 550, is of the opinion that in this verse, *splangchna* “might be regarded as the seat of the positive stirring of pity”.

⁴²⁹ There are only 8 instances in the Old Testament of the term being applied to humans, of which two are in any case “human metaphors” for God’s mercy (father, Psalm 103:13, and mother, Isaiah 49:15; of the 6 other, which refer to conduct towards the enemy, four appear in Jeremiah); Simian-Yofre, “*rhm*” 439-440; *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum AT*, Bd.II, Ernst Jenni & Claus Westermann, eds. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1993) col.763.

⁴³⁰ The other example of figurative use being a *verbal* inflection of $\sigma\pi\lambda\alpha\gamma\chi\nu\acute{\iota}\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ employed in the LXX variant of Proverbs 17:5 (see discussion below).

number of instances in which the term is exclusively applied to God, as it would then not be contrary to the notion that mercy is a divine attribute⁴³¹. An alternative translation of verse 12a and 12b, still with a figurative meaning, but on “first”, not “second” level, might then rather be: “The just man is concerned about his animals, but the innermost disposition of the wicked is cruel”. This choice of semantics for the term \sqrt{rhm} , and by transferral to $\sqrt{\sigma\pi\lambda\alpha\gamma\chi-}$, would not only accord with translations in other languages⁴³², but would be less of an anomaly in the sense that it does not ascribe the attribute of divine mercy to a human being, and also serves as substitute for terms which have a related semantic connotation (“disposition” or “inner attitude”) and which are indeed frequently used for “the person”/“the self”, namely \sqrt{lb}/\sqrt{lbb} and $\sqrt{nfš}$ (or their Greek equivalents καρδιά and ψυχή), terms that do not have the additional figurative dimension of “heartfelt pity”. It would in this guise be less exceptional than when accorded a second-level figurative meaning. Nevertheless, even if the above reasoning is valid, it would still not mean that the use of the term σπλάγχνα in Proverbs 12:10 is not noteworthy. As mentioned in footnote 20, Köster sees in its usage a hint of the notion of *splangchna* as the “seat of positive stirrings of pity”. It must therefore be accorded a degree of significance with respect to the semantic development of $\sqrt{\sigma\pi\lambda\alpha\gamma\chi-}$ as it is used in the New Testament (where the verbal inflections seem to have greater significance than the nominal inflections)⁴³³.

Another question which might at first glance seem superfluous or gratuitous, is why the Hebrew \sqrt{rhm} was not translated with *eleos* or *oiktirmoi*, as is the norm in the LXX⁴³⁴. One possible answer could be that it was for the sake of variation, just as some other Greek concepts such as *hileos* and *parakalein* were occasionally used to translate \sqrt{rhm} . However, an alternative and possibly more feasible explanation could be the following: some Greek terms which were employed in the early stage of the process of translation from the Hebrew to the Greek, gradually lost their “coinage” (their semantic value) or acquired a deviating meaning, and were as a consequence occasionally replaced by other Greek terms not readily

⁴³¹ A valid counter-argument would be that, in the Testament of the XII Patriarchs, a document more or less contemporaneous with the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, the divine epithets of “merciful”, “compassionate” etc. are applied to humans. This usage might have influenced the translator(s) of Proverbs. See discussion of the Testament XII below.

⁴³² French “les entrailles” NEG1979, German “das Herz” LUTH1545 & SCH2000, Italian “il cuore” NR2006, Spanish “entraña” NVI. The Afrikaans “die goddelose is wreed” is a type of coalescence in which the phrase “the disposition of the godless” (containing two terms) becomes a single term denoting the personhood of the wicked (“the godless”).

⁴³³ See later discussion of the appearance of *splangchn-* in the New Testament. The verbal form of *splangchn-* as it appears in Proverbs 17:5 will be discussed in the next subsection.

⁴³⁴ Of the 107 occurrences in the LXX in which \sqrt{rhm} is translated into the Greek (excluding the 22 times when it is used in a literal sense to refer to the “womb” or “entrails” and is translated with μήτηρ or κοιλία in various inflections), νοῖκτιρ- or νέλε- is used 94 times. The next most frequently-used term is ἀγαπᾶν, used five times. The other terms are instances of single use; cf. *ThDOT*, vol.13 439-451.

found in Hellenistic Judaism, but “imported” from a different sphere in order to have more currency and significance to Hellenised Jews. The term *charis*/χάρις (“favour”, “grace”) is a case in point: some scholars believe that Paul used/imported the term in order to “tailor” his preaching to the social-intellectual and conceptual climate of his times, during which for example the Hellenistic benefaction ideology made “inroads” into Judaism⁴³⁵. Although Breytenbach does not mention it explicitly, the Hebrew referential for this novel Greek term is $\sqrt{h}n$, the term which together with \sqrt{rhm} constitutes the first part of the grace formula. This phrase is consistently translated with the Greek terms οἰκτίρμων καὶ ἐλεήμων (“merciful” or “compassionate” and “gracious”). To come to the gist: Paul sometimes preferred to employ the term *charis* where the Hebrew term $\sqrt{h}n$ is evidently the referential, and where the usual term *eleos* would have been expected. His choice of terms might have been because the conventional term (*eleos*) was in diachronic terms losing some of its semantical potency, or acquired a different connotation, so that *charis* was substituted as a more indicative denotation⁴³⁶. It seems possible that the use of *splangchna* in Proverbs 12:10 (and *episplangchnizomenos* in Proverbs 17:5), was arrived at in a similar way⁴³⁷.

In summary: Proverbs 12:10 forms part of the latter *corpus* of the Hebrew Bible. It has either to be designated as a mere variation of other Greek terms for \sqrt{rhm} (which is possible, but not probable), or it has to be accorded some significance in the development of Jewish religious thought. It is the only instance of the nominal form of *splangchna* in the LXX denoting a figurative meaning and having the Hebrew \sqrt{rhm} as correlate. This terminology makes a relative late appearance in Judaism, probably in the decades directly preceding the Common Era. Additionally, it is likely that its use is contemporaneous with a similar usage in other Hellenistic Jewish religious documents, such as the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs which will shortly receive discussion, and which will offer some retrospective confirmation of the views tendered here. In this verse, it is more probable that *splangchna* refers to a person’s inner disposition or attitude, not to “stirrings of compassion”.

⁴³⁵ James R. Harrison, “Paul’s language of grace in its Graeco-Roman context”, WUNT, 2. Reihe, vol. 172 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003) 63; discussed in Breytenbach, “Charis and eleos” 209-214.

⁴³⁶ To bolster this supposition, it could be mentioned that in the Gospels of Mark and John, for example, the term *eleos* is not used once. A possible explanation might be that, during the time of writing their Gospels, they found the term *eleos* wanting. As will presently be seen, a similar diachronic process of “semantic debilitation” of the terms *ele-* and *oiktir-* seems to have led to the preferred use of *splangchnizomai* in the New Testament.

⁴³⁷ On the other hand, the opposite may be true: the translator(s) may have selected *splangchna* above *eleos* precisely because they preferred a term which only designated “feelings” and not one which designated “compassion/pity”.

4.2.1.2 Proverbs 17:5 ὁ δὲ ἐπισπλαγχνιζόμενος ἐλεηθήσεται

“He that has compassion shall find mercy”⁴³⁸

Just as σπλάγγνα in Proverbs 12:10 is the only example of the *nominal* use of this term in a non-literary sense, ἐπισπλαγχνιζόμενος in Proverbs 17:5 is the only instance in which a *verbal* form, the present participle, is employed to denote a figurative meaning. This usage is also atypical in some other respects: it is the only instance in the LXX of a verbal inflection of σπλάγγν- receiving the prefix ἐπι- (thus also making it a *hapaxlegomenon*), and lastly, the phrase does not have a matching Hebrew equivalent, but is an addition in the Greek text⁴³⁹. From this it also follows that, from a chronological perspective, its use should be accorded a relatively late date⁴⁴⁰. As was the case with *splangchna* in Proverbs 12:10, the question should again be raised whether a translation which allocates a second-level meaning to *episplangchnizomenos* does not stretch the semantic fabric of the term. In this case, it seems less likely. Although such a translational choice, ascribing the divine attribute of mercy to a human, would again be exceptional in terms of Old Testament usage, there are some considerations that favour this “higher-level” figurative meaning.

In terms of statistics, it could be reiterated that in the LXX translation of the Hebrew Bible, *vrhm* and its inflections are almost without exception translated into declensions and conjugations of either *οἰκτιρ-* or *ἐλεε-*, and nowhere else with *σπλάγγν-*, except in Proverbs 12:10 (there possibly denoting only “feelings”⁴⁴¹). It must also be pointed out that, although this last part of Proverbs 17:5 does not have a Hebrew original, the assumption could readily be made that the Hebrew *vrhm* nevertheless forms the semantic background for the Greek term *episplangchnizomenos* employed here: as was already argued under 2:1, there is no term in the Greek, not even *ἐλεέω/ἐλεήμων* or *οἰκτίρω/οἰκτιρμοί* in their various inflections, which more closely approximates the semantic dimension of “stirrings of compassion” or “heartfelt pity”

⁴³⁸ The Greek has no equivalent in the corresponding Hebrew version, which is shorter and reads *וְהַיִּיחֹשֶׁבֶת לְאִיִּדָּהּ* “He who rejoices in [another’s] misfortune will not go unpunished”. Translational options will again be discussed; the given translation is from “Elpenor’s ‘Home of the Greek Word’”: “The Greek Old Testament (Septuagint)”, <https://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/chapter.asp?book=26&page=17>, accessed on 29.4.2020. Other translations are the same, e.g. “Bible Study Tools”, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lxx/proverbs/17.html>, accessed 29.4.2020.

⁴³⁹ Strictly spoken, Proverbs 17:5 is not an exception in terms of the Hebrew Old Testament, as *vrhm* does not appear there, but only in the later Greek translation, as was already noted. Nevertheless, it must be assumed that *vrhm* is the implied semantic Hebrew equivalent; if the Greek term were to be “translated back” into the Hebrew, *vrhm* would be the best, and almost only choice, as will become clearer later in this section.

⁴⁴⁰ The *terminus ad quem* could nevertheless not be later than the early decades of the Common Era. Even if it were accorded an earlier date, it would still be contemporaneous with the supposed date of the Testament of the XII.

⁴⁴¹ The Hebrew *vrhm*, in all its varying inflections, is translated 94 times with *oiktirmos* or *eleos*, and only 13 times with alternatives. Regarding the *verbal* forms of *vrhm*, in the LXX, *oikteirô/oiktirô* or *eleêô* are used 41 times, with alternative terms like *agapân*, *hileos* or *parakalein* used only 7 times; Simian-Yofre, “*rhm*” 439.

inherent in the second-level figurative use of \sqrt{rhm} than the verb $\sigma\pi\lambda\alpha\gamma\chi\nu\acute{\iota}\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$. There could be discussion whether this single occurrence of the verbal form of $\sigma\pi\lambda\alpha\gamma\chi\nu\acute{\iota}\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ (here with prefix) is purely for the sake of variation, or whether additional significance must be given to this usage. If it were merely a term used for the sake of variation, it would then occupy the same position or status as other Greek concepts which are simply used as variations to the regular translation of \sqrt{rhm} into $\sqrt{\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon-}$ or $\sqrt{\acute{\omicron}\iota\kappa\tau-}$, and which are only used once, such as $\acute{\iota}\lambda\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ and $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\kappa\alpha\lambda\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$. Here, matters of chronology could be introduced which support an interpretation in favour of a semantic “loading” of the term, and against a view which sees the use as mere variation. The concepts $\sigma\pi\lambda\alpha\gamma\chi\nu\acute{\iota}\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota/\sigma\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\gamma\chi\nu\alpha$, serving as correlates of the Hebrew \sqrt{rhm} , and conveying a figurative meaning, either in a first-level figurative sense (“feelings”/“emotions”) or in a second-level figurative sense (“deeply-felt compassion”) are notions which only became current during a later phase of Jewish thought, in the period directly preceding the Common Era. Regarding the verbal forms of *splangchnizomai*, Köster states: “No transferred use has been found outside Jewish and early Christian literature”⁴⁴². It would not be an overstatement that these Greek terms acquired a special and even unique place in both “late”⁴⁴³-Jewish and early Christian religious thought.

To recapitulate: *(epi)splangchnizomenos* is on the one hand a unique denotation in the LXX in terms of statistics; with regard to chronology, it is on the other hand a denotation that had gradually become incorporated into Jewish religious thought in the period preceding the Common Era where it appears in Jewish writings such as the Testaments of the XII Patriarchs (which is approximately dated between 200 BCE until shortly after the Common Era)⁴⁴⁴. The very adoption of *splangchn-* into Jewish thought is an indication of the significance attached to it; it is therefore the contention of the present discussion that the use of the verbal inflection *(epi)splangchnizomenos* in Proverbs 17:5 has similar significance, and is not merely used as variation. To settle this contention, a final line of reasoning *e silentio* could be offered: supposing the scribe(s) supplementing the original Hebrew text with the additional Greek phrase indeed needed a term which signified “heartfelt sympathy”/“deep-seated compassion” (analogous to the Hebrew concept of \sqrt{rhm}), what other or better alternatives were at their disposal? Surely none better than *splangchn-*, given the deeper meaning that was imparted to this (originally “foreign”) term in Hellenistic Jewish thought. It was already shown that the *ele-*terminology gradually lost currency, and therefore might not have been considered for the

⁴⁴² Köster, *Σπλάγγων* 549.

⁴⁴³ Some scholars, in deference to Judaist usage, prefer the terminology “early-Jewish” to “late-Jewish”; see for example Schillebeeckx, *op.cit.* 841, and Cilliers Breytenbach, “Der einzige Gott – Vater der Barmherzigkeit. Thoratexte als Grundlage des paulinischen Redens von Gott”, *BThZ* 22:1 (2005) 37. Preference will here be given to the term “Hellenistic” in order to avoid misunderstanding.

⁴⁴⁴ See next section for further discussion.

meaning conveyed in Proverbs 17:5. The other alternative would be the present participle of οἰκτίρω, but this term is often used as translation of the Hebrew $\sqrt{h}n$ or $\sqrt{h}nn$, not $\sqrt{r}hm$ (at least in every case of the grace motto), and, like *ele-* it does not signify a deep-seated feeling (“bowels of compassion”), at least to the same degree than *splangchn-*⁴⁴⁵. It seems indicated that one should attach due significance to this use of *splangchn-* in a verbal guise: it serves as the term deemed best to represent the Hebrew figurative concept of $\sqrt{r}hm$ as denoting something profound stirring one’s deepest being. If one considers the prefix *epi-* which is often added to convey intensity, this view becomes even more plausible. A just translation would thus be something like “He who is compassionate will find grace.” This is also the meaning attached to the verb by Köster, namely “to be merciful”⁴⁴⁶.

In conclusion: in his valuable and insightful article already referred to, Köster makes the following remark: “The LXX, then, does not enable us to say what was the OT Hbr. background for the use of σπλάγχνα in Jewish works in Gk.” He continues by stating: “The normal LXX equivalent for *rah^amim* is not σπλάγχνα but οἰκτιρμοί...” and “Similarly for *riham* the LXX has οἰκτίρω...or ἐλέεω, never σπλαγχνίζομαι”⁴⁴⁷. Proverbs 12:10 and 17:5 may to a degree be exceptions to Köster’s assertions. In the light of Köster’s above use of “normal” and “never”, they become almost “exceptional exceptions”. They are the only instances in the entire *corpus* of the LXX in which *splangchn-* adopts a figurative meaning. Since the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek during a relative late period of Hellenism, a further submission is tendered, namely that this terminology entered into the LXX due to the fact that the figurative use of *splangchn-* had already become adopted elsewhere in Jewish religious thought, that is to say, that it had become current independently of the Jewish Scriptures, even displacing to some degree the usual LXX denotations *ele-* and *oiktir-*⁴⁴⁸. This postulate will acquire further support in the next section.

⁴⁴⁵ An analogous *argumentum e silentio* could be offered for the sake of support and also for the sake of interest: concerning the pericope in John 21: 15-17, there has been discussion whether John’s use of φιλέω (Φιλεῖς με) for Jesus’ final reiteration of his question to Peter, instead of ἀγαπᾷν (ἀγαπᾷς με) used twice before, is merely for the sake of variation, or indicates some “stepping down” to Peter’s level by Jesus and/or acceptance by Jesus that Peter’s love for Him is but human. Apart from other arguments which could be adduced against the view that the use of φιλέω is mere variation (the omission of πλέον τούτων in the second question, and the term τὸ τρίτον “the third time” instead of τρεῖς/τρία “three [times]”), one could ask the question: Suppose John had indeed intended a deeper significance, to indicate some “stepping down” or “compromising” by Jesus for Peter’s sake, how else would he have been able to do it?

⁴⁴⁶ Köster, Σπλάγχον 550.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ It is worth mentioning that Esser evidently sees the relationship between *eleos*, *oiktirmos* and *splangchna* in terms of degrees of comparison or progression: he understands *eleos* as the “feeling of being moved/stirred” (“das Gefühl der Rührung”), *oiktirmos* as denoting the lament/complaint or cry of compassion when observing the mishap of another (“die Äußerung der bemitleidenden Klage beim Anblick des Mißgeschehens eines

4.2.2 *The Testaments of the twelve patriarchs*

The pre-history of the New Testament usage of σπλάγχνα/σπλαγχνίζομαι offers another glimpse into the singularity of this term. In short: it did not enter the New Testament through mediation of the Greek Old Testament (the LXX) as might be expected⁴⁴⁹, but seems to have entered the New Testament under influence of a pseudepigraphical writing, the Testaments of the XII Patriarchs, which dates from the middle decades of the second century B.C.⁴⁵⁰

There are different scholarly opinions on whether the work was originally written in Hebrew or in Greek, though the only extant versions of the Testament are in Greek⁴⁵¹. However, even if the priority of a (now lost) Hebrew text is posited, this has no direct bearing on the purpose of the present discussion, which is to elaborate on Köster's observation that the reception of the concept σπλάγχ- into the New Testament occurred via the Greek version of the Testaments of the XII, and not through the mediation of the (Greek) LXX⁴⁵². It is self-evident that this view could only be tenable if the Testament of the XII predates the writings of the New Testament, or at least those New Testament texts that contain the term σπλάγχ- in its various guises. Regarding the priority of the XII to the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament, there is general consensus that the text of the XII, even if not *ab origine* a Greek work, existed in Greek not later than the first decades of the first century A.D., and possibly as early as the second century B.C.⁴⁵³, thus at the latest still predating most, if not all, the books of the New

andern") and *splangchna* (nominal form) as indicating the strongest and deepest seat of this feeling (the heart/being). He then adds the *verbal* forms of *splangchn-* as a fourth degree of comparison/progression: they (and evidently only they) are an expression of the "activation" of these feelings into deeds ("die behelfende Betätigung dieses Gefühls"), "Barmherzigkeit" 52. However debatable some aspects of this view may be, it at the very least accords a favoured position to *splangchn-*, and moreover awards an even more important significance to the verbal forms of *splangchn-* than to the nominal forms, a view which will be supported in the next section.

⁴⁴⁹ Even though the terminology is twice used in the LXX in a semantically expanded way, as was pointed out in the preceding discussion, the two occurrences in Proverbs must be accorded a late date, contemporaneous to the use of *splangchn-* in other Jewish religious texts. The sources lie elsewhere, not in the LXX.

⁴⁵⁰ Robert Henry Charles, *The Greek Versions of the Testaments of the Patriarchs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908) xix-xx.

⁴⁵¹ Charles, *op.cit.* xix-xxxix, offers seemingly convincing arguments (mainly based on the perceived Hebrew structure and idiom of the XII) that the original texts go back to two Hebrew sources; however, this view is in turn disputed by T. Nicklin in "The Classical Review", Vol. 3:3 (Cambridge: CUP, 1909) 83-84. In a more recent article, Howard Clark Kee also supports the notion of a Greek original, for example pointing out that the speech and writing of Greek-speaking Hellenistic Jews may well exhibit a Hebrew syntax and structure; Kee, *art.cit.* 776. For the purposes of the present study, the question is moot, since the Greek version is investigated.

⁴⁵² "The LXX, then, does not enable us to say what was the OT Hbr. background for the use of σπλάγχνα in Jewish works in Gk"; Köster, *Σπλάγχων* 550. First quoted on page 128, last paragraph.

⁴⁵³ Charles, *Testaments* ix, xlii-xliv. Charles also refers to two instances where Paul seems to quote verbatim from respectively the Testament of Asher 6:2 (Romans 1:32; a nine-word sentence) and the Testament of Levi 6:11 (1 Thessalonians 2:16; eight words). Some scholars find more instances of correspondence; see further discussion.

Testament. This document, very significant for a central and original concept in the New Testament, will presently come under scrutiny.

There are several instances in the XII where the term σπλάγχν- in various inflections appears. In the words of Köster: “These offer many instances of a use which differs plainly from that of the LXX”⁴⁵⁴. Under point 4.2.1, advance mention was made that in the New Testament, instances of the *noun* σπλάγχνα could suggest three possible semantic fields: firstly a literal one (“bowels”) and secondly a “first-level” figurative one (“deep feelings/affections” relating to one’s entire being). However, in order to acquire an intensified “second-level” figurative field (“moved to compassion”/“stirred by pity”), the nominal forms of *splangchna* seem to need additional buttressing through pairing with other related concepts, such as declensions of *ele-* or *oikt-* (often in the Genitive). On the other hand, the *verb* σπλαγχνίζομαι and its conjugations (which appear only in the Synoptic Gospels) only and always indicates the third dimension (“compassion”) and seems semantically adequate to do so without having to co-opt supporting terms. In the following discussion, an attempt will be made to show that this New Testamentic usage is antedated in the XII. It is possible to group the occurrences of the term and its inflections into four categories: instances where the noun σπλάγχνα occurs on its own, instances where the noun occurs in apposition with related concepts (mainly ἔλε- and οἰκτιρ- in various forms), instances where it appears in a verbal guise standing on its own, and finally, instances where the noun is personified. As the semantic scope of the denotation *splangchn-* is the point of the discussion, the occurrences of the term in its inflections will not simply be listed statistically and singly without reference to their context; the entire clause or phrase in which they appear will be quoted. Not only will the meanings of the term become clearer; the reader will also come under the impression of the general emotive mood of care and compassion that especially permeates the Testament of Zebulon, in which the fate that had befallen Joseph is recalled.

4.2.2.1 Category 1: nominal forms of *splangchn-* standing on their own

Whenever the noun σπλάγχνα (plural) or its declensions are employed in the Testament XII, they denote at the very least the seat of human feelings/emotions⁴⁵⁵, and thus by extension the individual in their full personhood. Whereas the noun originally had only a literal connotation, that of the innards/bowels/intestines (the closest English equivalent would be

⁴⁵⁴ Köster, Σπλάγχον 551.

⁴⁵⁵ The “centre of human feeling and sensibility generally”; Köster, Σπλάγχον 551. There is a semantic correspondence between this term and the Hebrew *ṣēf* (“soul”) and *leb/leb* (“heart”). In the XII, the term also acquires a heightened figurative meaning in some instances, as will presently become evident.

“spleen”⁴⁵⁶), it was subsequently employed (more specifically in the singular form *to splangchnon*) as early as the fifth century B.C. in secular Greek literature to signify affection or sympathy⁴⁵⁷. The nominal use of *splangchnon* or *splangchna* in Proverbs and in the Testament XII is the earliest extant examples of its transference to religious texts.

Test. Zebulon 2:2 Ἐλεήσατέ με, ἀδελφοί μου, οἰκτειρήσατε τὰ σπλάγχνα Ἰακώβ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν
Have mercy on me, have pity for the deep inner feelings of our father Jacob” [Joseph pleading to his brothers]⁴⁵⁸

A few observations should be made about this excerpt. It may appear as rather belonging to Category 2, since other semantically related terms like ἐλεήσατέ and οἰκτειρήσατέ appear in the same sentences with σπλάγχνα. However, in order to qualify for the second category, both the nominal guise of *splangchn-* and its appositives, such as *oikt-* and/or *ele-*, should refer to the same subject. The two related terms must “co-reside” within the same person. Firstly, here the imperative *eleésate me* is a separate clause, with *eleésate* not used in apposition with *splangchna*⁴⁵⁹. Secondly, regarding the second imperative, *oikterêsate ta splangchna lakôb*, Joseph’s brothers are the subject of *oikterêsate*, whereas the imperative has a different object, namely the feelings, *splangchna*, of Jacob. *Splangchna* and *oikterêsate* should not be perceived as correlates; *splangchna* denotes Jacob’s inner feelings of vulnerability, and hints at the ravaging emotional effect that being bereft of his beloved son would have on the aged and frail Joseph. In short: *splangchna* and *oikterêsate* have different *domicilia*, respectively Jacob and Joseph’s brothers. It could nevertheless be stated that this “stacking” of terms does have the effect of conveying the emotive mood of the scene.

⁴⁵⁶ There is an interesting occurrence of a cognate of *splangchna*, namely σπλήν, *splên* (to which the English “spleen” is closest) used in the literal sense in Test. Naphtali 2:8: Πάντα γὰρ ἐν τάξει ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς καλὰ...ἥπαρ πρὸς θυμόν, χολήν πρὸς πικρίαν, εἰς γέλωτα σπλήνα “For God made everything seemly/apt in their order...the liver for wrath, the gall for bitterness, the spleen for merriment”.

⁴⁵⁷ For example in Sophocles; Esser, “Barmherzigkeit” 56.

⁴⁵⁸ Köster, art.cit., states that σπλαγχιζόμενος (in other words, the *verbal* form) is the single instance in Test. Zeb. (4:2) which represents mere emotion, and not “the inner disposition that leads to mercy”, but this must be an oversight or a misprint of Zeb. 4.2 instead of 2.2 (listed above with translation). Köster might even have had Test. Zeb. 2.4 in mind, where the nominal form τῶν σπλάγχνων μου is used: the passage is often translated as “I [Zebulon] was moved to pity”, but given the nominal use of σπλάγχνα as well as the dittography “my bowels [τῶν σπλάγχνων μου] were loosened” together with “my liver was poured out”, a feasible translation may rather be “I was greatly upset” (given the ominous manner in which things were developing between Joseph and his brothers when they took him prisoner).

⁴⁵⁹ In any case, *ele-* here has both a subject (Joseph’s brothers) and an object (Joseph).

- Test. Zebulon 2:4 πᾶσα ἡ ὑπόστασις τῶν σπλάγχνων μου ἔχαινοῦτο ἐπὶ τὴν
 ψυχὴν μου
 ...the entire fundament of my bowels became loose within me”
 [Zebulon’s emotions on hearing Joseph plead for his life]
- Test. Naphtali 7:4 Καὶ ἐκαιόμην τοῖς σπλάγχνοις ἀναγγεῖλαι ὅτι πέπρᾳται· ἀλλ’
 ἐφοβούμην τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου
 And my heart was burning/ardent to tell him [Jacob] that he
 [Joseph] had been sold, but I was afraid of my brothers.

An intense emotional state usually finds manifestation in some kind of bodily, physical feeling. The body is the emotions’ medium of expression. What is evoked in the above citations is the intense feelings of distress that Zebulon experienced when confronted with the scene of Joseph’s lying prostrate before his brothers Simeon and Gad and pleading for his life, and of distress and guilt that Naphtali experienced when Jacob was standing in front of him, weeping about Joseph⁴⁶⁰. Whether it may be inferred that *splangchna* acquires a deeper dimension of “bowels of compassion” is as may be⁴⁶¹; it is clear from the context that, firstly, the term denotes a bodily experience of anguish. This notion gains support from the preceding clauses: internal organs of the body are described as being in turmoil or being moved because of Zebulon’s distressing emotional experience: “I felt pity for him, I started crying, and my liver dissolved/melted within me”⁴⁶². The last clause of the quotation forms a *parallelismus membrorum* with the wording containing *splangchna* quoted at the beginning of the section: τὰ ἥπατά μου ἐξελύθησαν ἐπ’ ἐμέ, καὶ πᾶσα ἡ ὑπόστασις τῶν σπλάγχνων μου ἔχαινοῦτο ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν μου, with “liver” and “spleen” counterparts in the dittography. This makes it fairly compelling to accord *splangchna* a denotation of deeply-felt distress (but not “pity”). An apt translation in both cases might therefore be “I felt sick to my heart” or “my heart melted”. Another reason why the meaning of *splangchna* in this context should not be elevated to the higher level of “compassion” is that neither Zebulon’s nor Naphtali’s internal subjective state was substantiated in an active intervention by them on Joseph’s behalf. From a hermeneutical viewpoint, such a translation would be stretching the meaning of the term in this specific context. True compassion has a transitive orientation; this transitive orientation, and its

⁴⁶⁰ It is noteworthy that in Luke 24:32 a similar expression is used to denote an intense emotional state (though not one of distress and shame): οὐχὶ ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν καιομένη ἦν ἐν ἡμῖν “Was our heart not burning in us?”, with *kardia* used instead of *splangchna*.

⁴⁶¹ At the beginning of 2:4, Zebulon mentions that he felt sorry (“came to pity” εἰς οἶκτον ἦλθον ἐγώ) for Joseph.

⁴⁶² Test. Zeb. 5:4a: εἰς οἶκτον ἦλθον ἐγώ, καὶ ἡρξάμην κλαίειν, καὶ τὰ ἥπατά μου ἐξελύθησαν ἐπ’ ἐμέ.

contrast with a mere feeling of pity, will become clearer during the course of discussion, especially when the verbal appearances of *splangchn-* are investigated.

Test. Benjamin 3:7 ὦ τέκνον Ἰωσήφ, ἐνίκησας τὰ σπλάγχνα Ἰακώβ τοῦ πατρός σου
O my son Joseph, you have conquered/overcome the deepest affections of Jacob” [Jacob to Joseph]

It is clear from the context that the term *splangchna* signifies nothing more but also nothing less than a first-level figurative meaning. On the one hand, it could not be signifying any further dimension such as heartfelt pity or compassion (second-level figurative), since neither Jacob nor Joseph are here in a situation that requires a compassionate response to one or both of them (they have been reunited). On the other hand, it does signify Jacob’s deep-seated sentiments or inner disposition, and his full openness and vulnerability - his humanity - with regard to his dearly-loved son⁴⁶³. It could be mentioned in advance that this usage of the term is also found in several instances in the New Testament⁴⁶⁴.

The next three quotations will receive joint attention:

Test. Zebulon 9:8 καὶ ἴασις καὶ εὐσπλαγχνία ἐπὶ ταῖς πτέρυξιν αὐτοῦ [τοῦ κυρίου]⁴⁶⁵
And healing and compassion are under his [the Lord’s] wings

Test. Asher 7:7 Ἄλλ' ἐπισυνάξει ὑμᾶς κύριος ἐν πίστει δι' ἐλπίδα εὐσπλαγχνίας αὐτοῦ
But the Lord will gather you in faithfulness through the hope of His deep compassion

Test. Benjamin 4:1 μιμήσασθε ἐν ἀγαθῇ διανοίᾳ τὴν εὐσπλαγχνίαν αὐτοῦ
With a good attitude/disposition imitate his example of true compassion [Benjamin to his sons about the good man, τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἀνδρὸς; Joseph is implied]

In these excerpts, the nominal form of *splangchna* acquires a slightly different semantic hue. The concrete noun *splangchna* has become the more abstract noun *splangchnia* which is a

⁴⁶³ One finds a similar usage of the term in another more or less contemporaneous Jewish document, the Testament of Abraham, Version A.III, though a different verb is employed: ἐκινήθησαν δὲ τὰ σπλάγχνα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ “Abraham’s innermost being was in motion/turmoil”; cf. *ThDNT* VII 551. For matters of dating, cf. James, *Testament Abraham*, Introduction.

⁴⁶⁴ For example 2 Corinthians 6:12 & 7:15, Philemon 7, 12 & 20, and 1 John 3:17, to be discussed later.

⁴⁶⁵ The preceding clause is Καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἀνατέλλει ὑμῖν αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος, φῶς δικαιοσύνης “And after all these things the Lord Himself will arise over you, a Light of Righteousness.”

conceptual step further away from the usage of the concrete noun. The concrete noun *splangchna* could denote either literally the intestines (“spleen”), or figuratively emotions which are made palpable through the psychosomatic effect that they have on the internal organs (“stirring”, “being moved”). The usage of the abstract noun seems to create a conceptual shortcut: whereas terms which literally refer to organs, such as *splangchna* (“spleen”) and *hepata* (“liver”) first have to be “metaphorised” in the mind of the listener/reader to acquire a figurative meaning, this step or process is eliminated by changing the literal noun into the abstract noun *splangchnia*⁴⁶⁶ - thus, the morphological change also has an effect on the semantical denotation of the term.

The abstract noun used here also acquires an added denotational value through the prefix *eu-* which in this case has an adjectival function and serves to intensify or amplify the semantical ambit of *splangchnia*⁴⁶⁷. This correlates to the appositive use of similar but separate terms, like *ele-* and *oikt-*, with *splangchna* to deepen its meaning, a usage which will be discussed in the next section. To regather the strands of thought: it appears as though, when the intention is to invest the nominal guises of *splangchna* with the added figurative dimension of “deeply-felt compassion” or “heartfelt pity”, concepts like *ele-* and *oikt-* are summoned to support the term *splangchna*. It may well be possible that the prefix *eu-* has the same supporting function, conveying a “second-level” figurative meaning to *splangchna*.

Regarding the use of *eusplangchnia* in the excerpts from the Testaments of Zebulon and Asher, there could not be much doubt that the concept is invested with the highest figurative meaning, that of heartfelt compassion: not only does the prefix *eu-* intensify the import of the concept, but the Subject of *eusplangchnia* is God, who never merely “suffers” or “undergoes” an emotion, but always makes them manifest in corresponding deeds. Through his acts, He

⁴⁶⁶ For further support, one could possibly tender the following line of reasoning: a parallel could be drawn with a similar usage of literal terms in English when expressions referring to bodily experiences like “I have goosepimples”, “There is a lump in my throat” or “There are butterflies in my stomach” first have to undergo a conceptual process of transformation from the physical denotation to the figurative meaning, even if this process in the mind only takes a split second. This would apply to the employment of the literal noun *splangchna*. On the other hand, a statement such as “I am nervous” is without ado taken as figurative, since the association of “nervous” to one’s nerves/axons has long since been erased. Similarly, the utterance “He has the nerve to...” does not signify or evoke an association with the human Nervous System, but is forthwith taken as figurative (audacity/impudence). This could be the procedure occurring in the case of *splangchnia*.

⁴⁶⁷ It is worth noting that the denotation *eusplangchnia* (abstract feminine noun) is only sporadically found in Hellenistic non-religious documents, whereas the denotation *eusplangchnos* (singular male adjective) only appears in Jewish or Christian literature, with no parallel use in other Hellenistic literature; Köster, *Σπλάγχων* 549. Even so, it is a term not often used: the present author could only find 2 instances in the patristic literature, *Polycarp to the Philippians* V:2 and VI:1 where it is used with reference to deacons and to presbyters in the congregation, *The Apostolic Fathers II*, Loeb Classical Library, G.P. Goold, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press/London: Heinemann, 1970).

always “sets his emotions in motion”. As we have seen in the previous chapter, it is the “deed dimension” of compassion which validates it and makes it real and present. This is the meaning to be associated with the use of *eusplangchnia* in the two quotations.

Benjamin’s injunction to his sons could possibly be translated in two ways. If the above considerations are convincing enough, then *eusplangchnian* (Accusative) must be accorded a deepened figurative meaning and Benjamin’s entreaty be translated as “Imitate his sincere/deep-rooted compassion with sincere hearts”. The alternative would be to interpret *eusplangchnia(n)* in terms of the foregoing expression *en agathe, dianoia*. They could be taken as a *formula ad idem* or a dittography denoting a corresponding mindset between Joseph and Benjamin’s sons. If this is a reasonable interpretation, then *eusplangchnia(n)* will still have a figurative designation, but without the amplified meaning of evoking “stirrings of compassion”. A possible translation would then be “With good intentions imitate his goodly disposition”⁴⁶⁸. As the present writer is not in the invidious position of a translator who, in the final analysis, has to settle irrevocably for a single translational option, both translational interpretations will here be upheld.

In conclusion: it has become fairly evident that, in the Testament XII, when the noun *splangchn-* in its various declensions stands on its own, a figurative meaning (“feelings”, “emotions”, “disposition” involving the whole person) is firstly indicated (though it may in some cases secondly acquire an even deeper figurative meaning). This use of the term is not unique, as it has its antecedent in non-religious Greek literature (as mentioned at the beginning of the section). However, in the Testament XII, the term undergoes a further semantical transformation: from indicating feelings or emotions, it is transformed into a term denoting “bowels of compassion”, “heartfelt/deeply-felt compassion”, “being deeply moved by pity”. This use of the term is unique to Jewish religious literature of the Hellenistic period. In the case of the last two texts that were examined, it further seemed that, if the noun *splangchn-* is required to denote this deeper dimension (heartfelt compassion) without any doubt, it needs “auxiliary treatment”, such as being changed into an abstract noun and/or receiving the prefix *eu-*. Whereas in the last-mentioned two cases the treatment consisted of morphological changes to the term itself, there are further instances in the Testament XII in which *splangchn-* does not receive mere “morphological treatment”, but appears in conjunction with separate and independent, but related denotations. The impression which one receives when studying such occurrences is that the “auxiliary treatment” is amplified. By co-opting alone-standing, related

⁴⁶⁸ *Eusplangchnia* could readily be translated into Afrikaans and Dutch (*welwillendheid*), German (*Wohllwollen*) or into French (*bienveillance*); cf. also the English term “benevolence”. In the English translation of Jonathan Littell’s *opus magnum*, *Les Bienveillantes* (“The well-willing/well-meaning/well-intentioned ones”), the title is “The Kindly Ones”.

concepts as its correlates, the import of the notion *splangchn-* is strengthened. This procedure will hence receive further attention.

4.2.2.2 Category 2: *Splangchn-* in conjunction with related terms

In this section, examples in the Testament XII of the term *splangchn-* joined with terms signifying compassion or mercy will be studied. When such examples have the same or similar wording they will be grouped together, at the conclusion of which general observations and deductions will be made.

4.2.2.2.1 Clauses/phrases in which nominal or adjectival inflections of *splangchn-* are combined with relevant terms by the conjunction “and” (καὶ).

Test. Simeon 4:4 Ἰωσήφ δὲ ἦν ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός [...] ⁴⁶⁹, εὖσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων
Joseph was a good man, full of compassion and mercy
[kindness and compassion]

Test. Zebulon 5:1 Καὶ νῦν, τέκνα μου, ἀναγγελῶ ὑμῖν τοῦ φυλάσσειν τὰς ἐντολὰς
κυρίου, καὶ ποιεῖν ἔλεος ἐπὶ τὸν πλησίον, καὶ εὖσπλαγχνίαν
πρὸς πάντας ἔχειν [...] ⁴⁷⁰.
And now, my children, I call on you to preserve the Lord's
commandments, to do mercy to your neighbour, to be
compassionate to everyone [...]

Test. Zebulon 9:7 ὅτι [ὁ κύριος] ἐλεήμων ἐστὶ καὶ εὖσπλαγχνος, μὴ λογιζόμενος
κακίαν τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ⁴⁷¹
For the Lord is merciful and compassionate, not intending ill
towards humans

A few observations are to be made about the examples listed above. Firstly, *splangchn-* and the concept with which it is coupled (forms of *eleos*) are separate and independent terms (respectively either nouns or adjectives). At the same time, they are mutually complementing terms, in the first and third excerpt forming a *hendiadys*, and in the second excerpt constituting a typical Hebraic *parallelismus membrorum* or dittography. There is no grammatical

⁴⁶⁹ The omitted phrase is καὶ ἔχων πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐν ἑαυτῷ, “and having the spirit of God in him”.

⁴⁷⁰ The final phrase is οὐ μόνον πρὸς ἀνθρώπους, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰς ἄλογα, “not only to human beings, but even to dumb animals.”

⁴⁷¹ Noteworthy is that a similar abbreviated form of the mercy motto, but one in which the traditional epithets of the LXX are used (in the guise of personified adjectives), appears in Judah 19:3 Ἀλλ' ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων μου, ὁ οἰκτίρων καὶ ἐλεήμων συνέγνω “But the God of my fathers, the Compassionate and Merciful, pardoned [me].”

subordination of one concept with respect to the other. Secondly, it is almost certain that the word-pairs in the first and third examples (respectively εὐσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων, and the reversed order) allude to first part of the mercy motto of the Old Testament (οἰκτιρῶν καὶ ἐλεήμων, *rahûm w^ehannûn*). Thirdly, in the LXX, the usual term employed as translation for *√rhm* in its various inflections is *oiktir-* (sometimes also *ele-*)⁴⁷²; here we have one of the earliest texts in which the concept *oiktirmôn* is replaced by the concept *eusplangchnos*, a trend which would find imprint in the New Testament. Lastly: whereas the Hebrew *√rhm* (sc. Greek *oiktir-*) in the Old Testament is almost exclusively associated with God⁴⁷³, here we have the epithet *eusplangchnos* as well as the *hendiadys*, referring to a human being (Joseph). Together with Proverbs 17:5, this is the earliest extant example of such usage, applying epithets of the mercy motto to a human being,

4.2.2.2.2 Clauses/phrases in which nominal inflections of *splangchn-* and related terms are combined by the ἐν + Dative construction.

Test. Zebulon 5:3 Ἔχετε οὖν ἔλεος ἐν σπλάγγχοις ὑμῶν, τέκνα μου [...] ⁴⁷⁴

Therefore have mercy in heartfelt compassion, my children [...]

Test. Zebulon 5:4 οὐκ ἐποίησαν ἔλεος ἐν σπλάγγχοις αὐτῶν

They did not practise mercy in heartfelt compassion [Joseph's brothers with regard to Joseph]

Test. Zebulon 7:3 Εἰ δὲ μὴ ἔχετε πρὸς καιρὸν δοῦναι τῷ χρήζοντι, συμπάσχετε ἐν σπλάγγχοις ἐλέους ⁴⁷⁵

If you have nothing to give the needy person at the specific time, show sympathy in heartfelt compassion.

Test. Zebulon 8:1a ⁴⁷⁶ Καὶ ὑμεῖς οὖν, τέκνα μου, ἔχετε εὐσπλαγχνίαν κατὰ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐν ἐλέει [verse 1b follows]

⁴⁷²“The normal LXX equivalent for *rah^amîm* is not σπλάγγχα but οἰκτιρμοί...Similarly for *riham* the LXX has οἰκτίρω...or ἐλεέω, never σπλαγγνίζομαι”; Köster, *Σπλάγγχον* 550.

⁴⁷³ Two of the exceptions, those in Proverbs discussed earlier, being late occurrences.

⁴⁷⁴ The concluding clause is ὅτι ὡς ἂν τις ποιήσῃ τῷ πλησίον αὐτοῦ, οὕτως καὶ ὁ κύριος ποιήσῃ αὐτῷ, “so that whatever someone does for his neighbour, the Lord may do for him.”

⁴⁷⁵ This verse also belongs to the next category (constructions in the Genitive). It will receive attention in the general discussion.

⁴⁷⁶ Verse 8:1b (ἵνα καὶ ὁ κύριος εἰς ὑμᾶς σπλαγγνισθεὶς ἐλεήσῃ ὑμᾶς) will feature under a following subsection (4.2.2.3).

Therefore you too, my children, must have true and heartfelt compassion in [a disposition of] mercy towards everyone.

Whereas in the previous category, terms which had equal grammatical and semantical value were joined by the coordinating conjunction “and”, in this category, one of the terms is grammatically subordinated through use of the *en* + Dative construction. This grammatical tightening results in a semantical broadening: the grammatically-joined two-word phrase becomes a single concept with an expanded denotational value which fulfils the same function than a *hendiadys* or *parallelismus membrorum*. As further corroboration, it could be pointed out that in the examples cited (all four within the same Testament), it is not only *splangchna* which is subject to this subordinating treatment (three cases), but also *eleos* (one case). This interchangeability could only be valid if the combined meaning of the grammatical construction is unaffected.

4.2.2.2.3 Clauses or phrases in which nominal inflections of *splangchna* are joined with the Genitive of the noun *eleos*

Test. Zebulon 7:3 [Already listed under previous subsection; συμπάσχετε ἐν σπλάγχνοις ἐλέους⁴⁷⁷]

Test. Zebulon 8:6 Ὁ γὰρ μνησικάκος σπλάγχνα ἐλέους οὐκ ἔχει.
For he who has evil in his mind cannot have compassion in his heart.

Test. Gad 2:1⁴⁷⁸ καὶ ὅλως οὐκ ἦν ἐν ἐμοὶ ἥπατα ἐλέους εἰς αὐτόν
And by no means was there in my heart any compassion for him
[Gad about Joseph]

Semantically, there is no substantial difference between the *en* + Dative construction and the grammatical construction in which *splangchna* is united with another term through use of the Genitive, like in the three cases noted above. As in the previous category, the intention seems

⁴⁷⁷ This utterance belongs to three categories (*en* + Dative construction, *splangchna* + Genitive construction, and clusters of terms).

⁴⁷⁸ This excerpt is worth mentioning as it is the only instance in which *hepata* (“liver”) is substituted for *splangchna*; cf. also the use of *hepata* with the adjective *anileōs* (ἀνιλεῶς “without mercy/merciless”) in the same Testament (twice in Test. Gad 5:11: Ἐπεὶ οὖν ἐνέκειτο τὰ ἥπατά μου ἀνιλεῶς κατὰ τοῦ Ἰωσήφ, τῷ ἥπατι πάσχω ἀνιλεῶς “Therefore, because my inner being was set mercilessly against Joseph, I also suffered mercilessly in my inner being”). In Test. Zeb. 2:4, quoted under the first category (2.2.1, p.14), *hepata* is used as semantic equivalent of *splangchna* in a dittography, and in some versions of Test. Joseph 15:3, *kardia* fulfils the same role in a dittography or *parallelismus membrorum*: “My innermost being (*splangchna*) dissolved and my heart (*kardia*) melted” (when Joseph heard that his father was grieving for him).

again to let the combined terms express the sense of pity/compassion (*eleos*) which is experienced in one's deepest being (*splangchna*). Despite the grammatical subordination, it would not be feasible to accord the one term semantic priority above the other; they mutually qualify each other. Furthermore: the combined expression must be understood in terms of later modes of usage in Hebrew, more specifically the Genitive construction *hasdē rah^amīm* or *rah^amē hesed* found in some Dead Sea Scrolls⁴⁷⁹. Finally: though not containing the term *splangchna*, the citation from the Testament of Gad is worth mentioning, as it is the single instance in which the term *hepata* ("liver") is used as an alternative to *splangchna*: both literally denote internal organs, figuratively signify "one's inner/deepest being", and combined with the Genitive *eleous* signify "heartfelt pity". However, *hepata* never gained the currency that its equivalent, *splangchna*, acquired.

4.2.2.2.4 Clauses or phrases in which more than one related term is joined with *splangchna*.

Test. Zebulon 7:2 Καὶ ὑμεῖς οὖν, τέκνα μου, [...] ⁴⁸⁰ ἀδιακρίτως πᾶσι σπλαγχνιζόμενοι ἐλεᾶτε, καὶ παρέχετε παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐν ἀγαθῇ καρδίᾳ.

Therefore you too, my children...must without discriminating be merciful towards all with a compassionate inner being, and be giving to everyone with a kind heart.

Test. Zebulon 7:3 [Previously listed; συμπάσχετε ἐν σπλάγχνοις ἐλέους]

Test. Zebulon 7:4b ⁴⁸¹ καὶ τὰ σπλάγχνα μου ἐστρέφετο ἐπ' αὐτῷ εἰς συμπάθειαν.

And my deepest being would be in turmoil out of sympathy for him.

The kernel of the first two verses is still the grammatically-coupled terms *splangchna* and *eleous* (in various inflections) as discussed under the previous category; however, each word-pair is further enhanced by the addition of a third concept: in the first case "good/sincere hearts", with *kardia* signifying one's deepest being and thus serving as doublet to *splangchna*, and in the second case a verbal form (Imperative) of *sumpatheia*. The last excerpt could possibly belong to the first category, namely nominal forms of *splangchna* appearing on their

⁴⁷⁹ Respectively 1QS 22 and 1QS 2:1; Köster, *Σπλάγχχον* 552. Cf. Jer. 31:20 מִן הַיָּד הַזֹּאת.

⁴⁸⁰ The omitted phrase is ἐξ ὧν παρέχει ὑμῖν ὁ θεός, "from what God presents/gives to you".

⁴⁸¹ Verse 4a reads Οἶδα ὅτι ἡ χεὶρ μου οὐχ εὔρε πρὸς τὸ παρὸν ἐπιδοῦναι τῷ χρήζοντι, καὶ ἔτι ἑπτὰ σταδίου συμπορευόμενος αὐτῷ, ἔκλαιον, "If I knew that my hand could find nothing at present/for the time being to give to the needy person, I would walk seven stadia with him and cry."

own and generally referring to “mere” emotion⁴⁸², but it seems as though the intention of the author of Zebulon was to invest the noun *splangchna* with heightened meaning by co-opting the terms *estrefeto* (“were moved”) and *sumpatheia*, wanting to ensure that the nominal form of *splangchna* is not understood as simply an emotion or affect, but as deeply-felt pity: “my innermost being was moved by sympathy for him”.

4.2.2.3 Category 3: verbal forms of *splangchn-* appearing on their own, or with verbal forms of *ele-*.

One of the intentions of the present discussion is to demonstrate that the *verbal* forms of *splangchnizomai*, when employed with other relevant terms, but more especially when standing on their own, represent a unique and special usage. They are therefore accorded a separate heading.

Test. Zebulon 4:2	σπλαγχνιζόμενος ἐπὶ ἰωσήφ ⁴⁸³ I was pitying Joseph from my heart/I was being moved to deep compassion for Joseph ⁴⁸⁴
Test. Zebulon 6:4	καὶ ἐκ τῆς θήρας μου παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ ξένῳ σπλαγχνιζόμενος ἐδίδουν And I gave from my sea catch to every stranger, with a heart stirred by compassion.
Test. Zebulon 7:1	Εἶδον θλιβόμενον ἐν γυμνότητι χειμῶνος, καὶ σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐπ' αὐτόν

⁴⁸² Section 4.2.2.1.

⁴⁸³ Preceded by Ἐγὼ γὰρ δύο ἡμέρας καὶ δύο νύκτας οὐκ ἐγευσάμην “For I ate nothing for two days and two nights [while pitying Joseph from my heart].” Joseph has been thrown into a pit for three days; eight of his brothers are part of the plot; Zebulon and Judah fear that Simeon and Gad are planning to kill Joseph.

⁴⁸⁴ As pointed out before, in Köster’s valuable article (“Σπλάγχχον” 551) he states that σπλαγχνιζόμενος is used only once to indicate “mere” emotion, giving Test. Zeb. 4,2 as reference. He continues by stating that in all other cases “it expresses the guiding inner disposition which leads to mercy” and cites Test. Zeb. 7:2, 6:4, 7:1 and 8:3. Some clarifying observations could be made. Firstly, his citing of Test. Zebulon 4:2 must be a metathetical printing error: *splangchizomenos* is used in 2:4, not 4:2 (where a nominal form of *splangchna* is used; τῶν σπλάγχχνων, Gen. plural). Secondly, as has been posited under 2.2.1, it is well possible that there are more than one case of *splangchn-* expressing “mere” emotion, such as Test. Zebulon 2:2 and 2:4, as well as Test. Ben. 3:7 and 4:1, where *splangchn-* may possibly have only the figurative meaning of “emotion/emotional” or “distress/distressed”, not the deepened figurative connotation of “bowels of pity” or “heartfelt compassion.” A table with all the occurrences of *splangchn-* in the Test. XII will be given at the end of the chapter.

I once saw a man suffering from nakedness in wintertime and had heartfelt compassion on him⁴⁸⁵

Test. Zebulon 7:2 ἀδιακρίτως πᾶσι σπλαγχνιζόμενοι ἐλεᾶτε [Also listed under previous subsection]

Test. Zebulon 8:1b ἵνα καὶ ὁ κύριος εἰς ὑμᾶς σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐλεήσῃ ὑμᾶς⁴⁸⁶
So that the Lord also may act in compassionate mercy towards you

Test. Zebulon 8:3 Ὅσον γὰρ ἄνθρωπος σπλαγχνίζεται εἰς τὸν πλησίον, τοσοῦτον κύριος εἰς αὐτόν
However much heartfelt compassion a person shows his neighbour, as much will the Lord show him.

Test. Zebulon 8:4 ἐμὲ δὲ ἰδὼν, ἐσπλαγχνίσθη⁴⁸⁷
When he [Joseph] saw me, he was moved with heartfelt pity

As addenda, the following excerpts from a later date could be quoted:

Testament of Abraham⁴⁸⁸, Recension B, 12:12-13 οὐ σπλαγχνίζεται [Abraham] ἐπὶ τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς ἀλλ' ἐγὼ [the Lord] σπλαγχνίζομαι ἐπὶ τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς
He does not show heartfelt compassion for the sinners, but I show heartfelt compassion for the sinners [The Lord about Abraham]

Apocalypse Moses⁴⁸⁹ (Life of Adam and Eve) 9:3 δεόμενοι τοῦ θεοῦ ὅπως σπλαγχνισθῇ ἐπ' ἐμέ
Pray to God that He may have compassion on me

⁴⁸⁵ Zebulon then went to his (own) house and secretly "stole" (κλέψας) a garment there and gave it to the destitute person. This piece of information is added in anticipation of later discussion of the concept *splangchn-* in one of the parables of Jesus.

⁴⁸⁶ The main clause, preceding this subordinate clause, was listed under 4.2.2.2.2.

⁴⁸⁷ Preceded by Ἰωσήφ οὐκ ἐμνησικακήσεν εἰς ἡμᾶς; "Joseph did not harbour any bad thoughts/ill feelings towards us" (on their meeting in Egypt).

⁴⁸⁸ Written in Greek in the first century A.D.; see Ed Parish Sanders, "Testaments of the Three Patriarchs", *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, vol. I, James Hamilton Charlesworth, ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1983) 869. James, *Testament Abraham* 55, accords it a later date (second century A.D.).

⁴⁸⁹ Also assumed to be from the first century A.D.; see Johannes Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve in Greek, Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece*, vol. VI, ed. Henk Jan de Jonge & Michael Anthony Knibb (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005) 67-107 for an exhaustive discussion of its transmission history.

[Adam to Eve and their son Seth]

In six of the eight quotations, a verbal form of *splangchnizomai* standing on its own is encountered, while in the remaining two quotations it is joined with respectively the Imperative and the Subjunctive forms of the verb *eleein* (as is the case with a previously cited example, Testament Zebulon 8:1a). It is not impossible to surmise that what one finds here is the “emancipation” of the concept *splangchn-*. In six instances, it does not need the co-option of related terms to unambiguously define its meaning as heartfelt compassion. The verbal forms of *splangchn-* suffice. The appearance in two cases of verbal forms of *eleein* in conjunction with *splangchnizomai* could be taken as evidence that this emancipation process was not unilinear: sometimes, the author still decided to combine *splangchn-* with other semantically related terms in order to ensure that the “higher-level” figurative significance of the term is conveyed, but the end-result, the conceptual final step, is the use of verbal forms of *splangchnizomai* standing on their own, and understood to signify what otherwise needed pairs of even groups of terms. This diachronic end result, the verb alone being deemed adequate to express the full extent of the figurative meaning, seems evident from the fact that religious documents post-dating the Testament XII dispense with complementary terms conjoined with the verb, as in the last two quotations above which date from the Common Era. Even more significant and conclusive is the fact that, in the case of the Synoptic Gospels, all twelve occurrences of the term *splangchn-* are in a verbal form standing on its own⁴⁹⁰. This aspect, and related matters, will receive investigation in the next chapter; for now, the conclusion could be made that there appears to be an unfolding of the semantic import of the verb *splangchnizomai*, especially in the testament of Zebulon.

4.2.2.4 Category 4: Personified forms of *splangchna*

In the previous section, verbal guises of *splangchnizomai* were discussed, and the conclusion arrived at was that it was possible to see a process in which these verbal guises attained “semantic independence”, not requiring ancillary terms to signify deeply-experienced pity. Since in three cases, verbal inflections of *splangchnizomai* still appear with supplemental terms in the same context (the Testament of Zebulon; verses 7:2, 8:1a and 8:1b), this progression must be perceived not so much as a diachronic or unilinear progression than as a conceptual progression. There is, however, still a final development in the signification of the term: the conceptual last step that takes place in the Testament XII is that *splangchna* is personified. This ultimate step takes place in three of the Testaments:

⁴⁹⁰ Discussion of the appearance of *splangchn-* in the NT follows. It could already be pointed out that with the exception of Luke 1:78 (σπλάγχνα ἐλέους, which is the direct equivalent of Test. Zeb. 8:6), nominal or adjectival forms of *splangchna* never appear in the Synoptics; only the twelve verbal guises.

Test. Levi 4:4	<p>ἕως ἐπισκέψηται κύριος πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σπλάγχνοις [υἱοὶ]⁴⁹¹ αὐτοῦ</p> <p>Until the Lord shall visit all the nations in his Compassion⁴⁹²</p>
Test. Zebulon 8:2	<p>ὅτι καίγε ἐπ' ἐσχάτων ἡμερῶν ὁ θεὸς ἀποστέλλει τὸ σπλάγχνον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, καὶ ὅπου εὗρη σπλάγχνα ἐλέους, ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ</p> <p>And also because in the last days the Lord will send his Compassion on the earth, and wherever He finds heartfelt compassion, in him He will dwell</p>
Test. Naphtali 4:5	<p>ἄχρι τοῦ ἐλθεῖν τὸ σπλάγχνον κυρίου, ἄνθρωπος ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην, καὶ ποιῶν ἔλεος εἰς πάντας τοὺς μακρὰν καὶ τοὺς ἐγγύς⁴⁹³</p> <p>Until the coming of the Lord's Compassion, a man practising righteousness and practising mercy towards all that are far away or nearby.</p>

In these three quotations, nominal forms of *splangchna* are employed as personifications of the term, namely Nominative singular twice and Dative plural once. Testament Judah 19:3 was already mentioned under subsection 4.2.2.2.1; it is another example from the XII of a substantive use of adjectives (in this case the first two epithets of the grace formula) to form a personification: Ἀλλ' ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων μου, ὁ οἰκτίρμων καὶ ἐλεήμων συνέγνω “But the God of my fathers, the Compassionate and Merciful, pardoned me.” Apart from the occasional use of personifications in the Old Testament⁴⁹⁴, this practice of changing nominal or adjectival forms of certain notions into personified or substantive nouns is also found in other Hellenistic

⁴⁹¹ The phrase “of his son” is probably a later Christian addition; see Charles, *Testaments* xlviii.

⁴⁹² There are interesting resemblances between Chapter 4 (consisting of six verses) of the Testament of Levi and the prophecy of Zechariah (Luke 1:67-80). Besides the fact that both are prophecies about the fulfilment of God's promise, the same or similar terms are found in Levi and Luke: for example, respectively ἐπισκέψηται κύριος/ἐπεσκέψατο [κύριος ὁ θεός], Φῶς γνώσεως/γνώσιν σωτηρίας, ἐν σπλάγχνοις/σπλάγχνα ἐλέους and ὁ ἥλιος ἔση/ἀνατολή ἐξ ὕψους ἐπιφᾶναι. It should be noted that Test. Levi 4:4b – 6 is clearly a Christian addition, but this does not necessarily explain, or explain away, the similarities in the first half of Test. Levi chapter 4.

⁴⁹³ Preceded by καὶ διασπείρει αὐτοὺς κύριος ἐπὶ προσώπου πάσης τῆς γῆς, “And the Lord will scatter them all over the earth.”

⁴⁹⁴ For example the divine appellation ἑλεός μου “My gracious/kindly One”; Ps. 144:2.

Jewish religious documents which are more or less contemporaneous with the Testament XII, as the following examples will show⁴⁹⁵.

Table 4.1: Personified adjectives

"The Merciful"	Sirach 48:20	καὶ ἐπεκαλέσαντο τὸν Κύριον τὸν ἐλεήμονα ⁴⁹⁶ And they called upon the Lord, the Merciful [The people of Israel in Hezekiah's time regarding the threat of the Assyrians]
"The Most High", "The Merciful"	Sirach 50:19	καὶ ἐδεήθη ὁ λαὸς Κυρίου Ὑψίστου ἐν προσευχῇ κατέναντι ἐλεήμονος And the people sought the Lord, the Most High, in prayer before the Merciful ⁴⁹⁷
"The Eternal"	Baruch 4:20	κεκράξομαι πρὸς τὸν αἰώνιον ⁴⁹⁸ I shall cry to the Eternal
	Baruch 4:22	ἐγὼ γὰρ ἤλπισα ἐπὶ τῷ αἰωνίῳ τὴν σωτηρίαν ὑμῶν I shall place my hope in the Eternal, your Saviour
"The Holy"	Baruch 4:37, 5:5	τῷ ῥήματι τοῦ ἁγίου By the word of the Holy One
"The Almighty"	Baruch 3:1,4	Κύριε παντοκράτωρ ὁ Θεὸς Ἰσραὴλ Lord the Almighty, God of Israel
	Pr. Man. 1.6	Κύριε παντοκράτωρ, ὁ Θεὸς τῶν Πατέρων ἡμῶν Lord the Almighty, God of our fathers

The personification of the singular or plural noun *splangchnon/splangchna* is a unique occurrence in the Testament XII. It is not only the earliest known pre-Christian document in which we find examples of such a personified usage, but also the only document. In fact, this

⁴⁹⁵ This usage is also continued in early Christian patristic documents, e.g. "The All-holy": Ὁ δημιουργὸς καὶ πατὴρ τῶν αἰώνων ὁ πανάγιος, 1 Clement XXXV.3.

⁴⁹⁶ We find a similar usage in Matthew 5:7 Μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, "Blessed [are] the merciful".

⁴⁹⁷ Although it is unfortunately beyond the scope of the present study, Islam's *Bismillah* ("Basmalah"), probably the most important motto or formula after the *Shahadah* ("I confess that] there is no god but -ll-h, and Mohammed is his prophet") does not only seem to be a relict of the first part of the OT grace formula (*rahûm w'ḥannûn*, "merciful and compassionate"), but also uses personifications of the adjective of "merciful/compassionate" (Arabic *ṛḥm*): *bismi llāhi 'arraḥmani 'arraḥimi* "In the name of -ll-h, the Merciful, the Compassionate", which is the prologue to all the surahs of the Quran, except one. Maclaurin, "Semitic background" 43 incorrectly states that this invocation "occurs at the head of every Sura". He also states that the *Bismillah* contains the "attributes indirectly posited to Jesus Christ in the phrase ἐν σπλάγχνοις χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ", which surely is seeking too far for a precedent, when personifying phrases like "The Merciful, the Compassionate" used in Hellenistic Jewish and Christian literature are closer at hand, such as Test. Jud. 19:3 quoted in the above paragraph; see further discussion under 5.1.2, p.153. An interesting observation made by him is that the Quran is important for a study of the Semitic background of the term *splangchna*: due to the conservative nature of Arabic (and by implication of Islam), the semantic "nuances" of its term for "compassionate" (*ṛḥm*) might be closer to the intended Hebrew meaning than any equivalent Greek terms.

⁴⁹⁸ There are seven instances of the personified noun "The Eternal" in Baruch, six of which are in chapter 4 (consisting of 37 verses in total): besides the two verses quoted above also ὁ αἰώνιος 4:10, 4:14 and τοῦ αἰωνίου 4:24, 4:35, 5:2. The Book of Baruch contains (only) 5 chapters.

usage did not find continuation in later documents of specifically Christian authorship, namely in the first instance the New Testament (which, together with the Old Testament, forms the matrix of the present study), even though other applications of *splangchn-*, as discussed under the first three categories above, were employed. The personified use of nominal forms of *splangchn-* in the XII is also unique and striking in another regard: the term now also acquires an eschatological significance. This added semantical connotation speaks clearly in the three texts from the Testaments of Levi, Zebulon and Naphtali quoted above and is corroborated from other verses in the same context and/or Testament which speak of the “last days”⁴⁹⁹. In the last days, the *splangchna* of the Lord will find embodiment, and it is this event that is the fulfilment and consummation⁵⁰⁰ of God’s compassion and plan with the world. This eschatological dimension will be elaborated upon in the next chapter, one of the reasons being that *eleos* often has an eschatological connotation in the New Testament (unlike *oiktirmoi*).

4.2.3 The pre-history of σπλάγγχον/σπλαγχνίζομαι in the New Testament: Summary

The above discussion about the usages in the Testament XII of the denotation *splangchn-* in various guises and with or without additional complementary terms will now be summed up before a last section containing final observations and conclusions is introduced.

Although it cannot be construed as a diachronic, unilinear progression, it is plain from a study of the Testament XII that from a conceptual point of view, the term *splangchn-* undergoes a process during which it acquires an increasing semantical value. As a signifier, it incorporates into itself an ever-expanding scope of meaning. The first step in this process which is evident in the XII was that the term *oiktir-* in its various guises was replaced by the term *splangchn-*: “Considering the usage of Test. XII as a whole, we find that σπλάγγχνα, σπλαγχνίζομαι and εὐσπλαγχνος have completely replaced the LXX words οἰκτιρμοί, οἰκτίρω and οἰκτίρων...They are thus a new translation of the Hebrew words *rahûm*, *riham*, and *rah^amîm* [Hebrew script]”⁵⁰¹. In short: the substitution of *oiktir-* by *splangchn-* was accomplished not in the LXX, but in the XII⁵⁰². The process of substitution which took place had a direct bearing on New Testament language about God’s mercy: “The translation of *rah^amîm* by σπλάγγχνα, which was not really introduced in the LXX but in later Jewish writings...is undoubtedly the

⁴⁹⁹ Test. Levi 7:2, 8:14; Test. Zeb. 9:8; Test. Naft. 8:1 (with the expression καιρούς ἐσχάτους, “end-time”; Acc.), 8:2. Other references to the last days are in Test. Dan 5:10, Test. Sim. 6:5, Test. Levi 2:11, Test. Jud. 24:1, Test. Gad 8:1, Test. Ash. 7:3, Test. Jos. 19:10 (containing the expression ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις “in the last days”), 19:11 and Test. Ben. 10:5.

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. Test. Ben. 11:3 ἕως συντελείας τῶν αἰώνων.

⁵⁰¹ Köster, Σπλάγγχον 552.

⁵⁰² “The normal LXX equivalent for *rah^amîm* [Hebrew script] is not σπλάγγχνα but οἰκτιρμοί [...] Similarly for *riham* [Hebrew script] the LXX has οἰκτίρω...or ἐλεέω, never σπλαγχνίζομαι”; Köster, art.cit. 550. This excerpt was also quoted in fn. 64, p.20 for the sake of the discussion there.

direct presupposition if the NT usage”⁵⁰³. This development also has a direct bearing on the grace formula: whereas the first two epithets of the formula (*rahûm w^ehannûn*) were consistently translated with the phrase οἰκτίρων καὶ ἐλεήμων in the LXX, the formula now contains the term *eusplangchnos* in the place of *oiktirmôn*, as in Testament Zebulun 9:7 ἐλεήμων ἐστὶ [ὁ κύριος] καὶ εὐσπλαγχνος. This is however not the *terminus* of the process: the term *eusplangchnos* could even replace both epithets of the grace formula, for example in the Prayer of Manasseh: whereas the full grace formula reads οἰκτίρων καὶ ἐλεήμων, μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος [καὶ ἀληθινός], verse 6 of the Prayer reads εὐσπλαγχνος, μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος. One has to deduce that the single term is deemed adequate to denote the full semantic spectrum of what formerly required a *hendiadys*; the complementary term ἐλεήμων is now perceived as being redundant. This eventual “ousting” of *eleēmôn* (the remaining term of the *hendiadys*) in favour of *eusplangchnos* may have been facilitated by two factors: firstly, both terms had an eschatological connotation⁵⁰⁴ (whereas *oiktirmôn* did not)⁵⁰⁵: discarding the term *eleēmôn* did not diminish the eschatological significance that the phrase acquired in latter Jewish thought. Secondly, the prefix *eu-* “good” (adjective) or “well” (adverb) might possibly taken as enhancing the semantic value of the term; as prefix it may be deemed to serve the same function that one of the items of a *hendiadys* or dittography would otherwise have served.

There is, however, another *stratum* on which a transformation of the notion *splangchn-* takes place. As was shown in the above discussion, it gradually incorporated into itself the meanings signified by *oiktir-* and *ele-*, becoming a denotation adequate to express the full semantical domain encompassed by these two terms. This was a process which happened within the context of Jewish religious writings. However, the unfolding of the semantic fabric of the term also occurred within the context of general literature of the Hellenistic period. Stated in another way: in the “interface” between Jewish Greek religious literature and non-religious Greek literature, the word *splangchna*, which literally referred to the intestines, or figuratively denoted “feelings”, and which was current in both religious and non-religious/gentile literature, was appropriated by a Jewish religious writer (or writers) to denote an even deeper dimension, that of “heartfelt pity” or “deep compassion”. This usage is unique and original to Jewish religious thought, and with the possible exceptions of the two verses in Proverbs (of which at least one must receive a late dating, therefore possibly post-dating the Testmant XII), it is not even

⁵⁰³ Köster, art.cit. 552.

⁵⁰⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, entry “ἔλεος, ἐλεέω, ἐλεήμων...”, *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, vol. II, Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, eds. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer & Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 481.

⁵⁰⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, entry “οἰκτίρω, οἰκτιρμος, οἰκτιρμῶν”, *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, vol. V, Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, eds. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer & Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 160.

precedented in the LXX. However, equally remarkable is the fact that the transformation or semantic evolution of the term *splangchn-* does not end here. We have seen that the first step in its semantic evolution was to adopt a term, the plural noun *splangchna*, which enjoyed a shared literal or figurative usage in both religious and non-religious literature, and allocate it a “next-level” figurative meaning of “compassion”. This figurative or transferred meaning was conveyed by co-opting “auxiliary” terms to complement *nominal* (and sometimes verbal) forms of *splangchna*. Conceptually, a further step in the semantic expansion of the term took place when *verbal* guises of *splangchnizomai* standing on their own were deemed adequate to convey what otherwise needed complementary terms. This procedure was already mentioned earlier: the verbal inflections of the term attain a position of semantic independence, not needing support from other related terms to convey the intended meaning. This usage of verbal inflections of *splangchnizomai* to denote “bowels of compassion”/“heartfelt pity” is unique and unparalleled in any contemporaneous non-Jewish Greek literature, where it only had the meaning “to eat/partake of the intestines”. It is a usage which will receive further attention in the next chapter.

On reviewing the semantic expansion that took place with regard to the term *splangchn-* as outlined above, one might conclude that the process was exhaustive. There is however a final phenomenon that materialises: nominal forms of *splangchnon* (singular) or *splangchna* (plural) are invested with an ultimate meaning, namely as terms referring to God, as indicated under Category 4. Personifying certain notions to function as divine epithets was a practice of Jewish thought of a later period, of which some examples, like “The Almighty”, “The Holy”, “The Merciful” were given under category 4. As a rule, these are personifications of terms, mainly adjectives, found in the Old Testament. What is remarkable is firstly that in this case the source is an extra-biblical term, and secondly that it originally had a coarse meaning in its nominal and verbal guise (“guts/bowels” and “to eat the innards” or “to partake of the sacrifices”), but ultimately finds refinement in the way it is used in the Testament of the XII. “The most important in the new usage which begins in Test. XII is that the originally rather crude term *σπλάγχνα* can be applied to God Himself”⁵⁰⁶. The word “phenomenon” at the beginning of this paragraph was intentionally chosen: it would hardly be an overstatement to say that the usage of the term *splangchn-* in the Testament XII is “phenomenal”: even from a purely literary perspective, it was an achievement to invest a concept that already had a figurative meaning of “feelings/emotions” with the transferred meaning of “compassion”, further to free the verbal forms of *splangchnizomai* from conjunctions with other complementary terms, and as a final outcome to elevate the term to a personification of God. In one fell swoop, within the context

⁵⁰⁶ Köster, “*σπλάγχνα*” 551-552.

of a single document, Jewish religious thought is gifted with a terminology that incorporates into itself one of the indispensable themes of the Old Testament, that of mercy and compassion, and of a God that is at the same time merciful and compassionate. This gift is also bestowed on Christian thought, as will presently be demonstrated.

4.3 Σπλάγχον, σπλαγχνίζομαι: Conclusions

The value of the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs for a Theology of the New Testament (or for a Biblical theology) in general, but also specifically for a study of the concept *splangchnizomai* in the New Testament could hardly be overstated. Apart from the Jewish Old Testament (whether in Hebrew or in Greek), and apart from Christian documents now lost but presumed to have been used by New Testament authors (such as the “Quelle” or the surmised Matthean or Lukan “Sondergut”) there are few existing documents which had such an influence on the New Testament. The influence of the Testament XII on the New Testament writers could firstly be inferred from passages which show a mutual affinity or similarity. The resemblances between the Testament of Levi and the prophecy of Zechariah have been pointed out previously⁵⁰⁷. A case could be made that the author James knew the Testaments, as there are several correspondences regarding terminology and thematics between the two documents, for example hearing and doing the word⁵⁰⁸ and the theme of doublemindedness, two-facedness and a double tongue⁵⁰⁹. More specifically, there are verses in the New Testament which seem to have been taken verbatim from the XII. For honesty of argument, it must be admitted that related religious documents will share a general vocabulary and store of phrases, and that parallels should be approached with the necessary *caveats*. On the other hand, a shared stock of terms and phrases does not preclude the fact that specific loaning or copying of one tradition by another may have taken place. Another reservation to be maintained is that some versions of the Testaments also have portions which are clearly later Christian interpolations, mostly in the context of eschatological prophecies of the coming of God’s Representative in the last times. However, even if allowance is made for these reservations, there are striking similarities between sentences or phrases in the New Testament and the Testament XII. R.H. Charles made a thorough and exhaustive study of such correspondences, some of which may simply be coincidental. Nevertheless, even if doubtful or possibly spurious examples from his overview are omitted, and the *caveats*

⁵⁰⁷ Subsection 4.2.2.4, fn. 490.

⁵⁰⁸ Test. Gad 6:1 ἀγαπῶντες ἀλλήλους ἐν ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ καὶ διανοίᾳ ψυχῆς, James 1:22 γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ λόγου, καὶ μὴ ἀκροαταὶ μόνον; cf. I John 3:18 μὴ ἀγαπῶμεν λόγῳ μὴδὲ τῇ γλώσσῃ, ἀλλὰ ἐν ἔργῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ.

⁵⁰⁹ Test. Asher 1:3 Δύο ὁδοὺς, δύο διαβούλια, 3:1 διπρόσωποι and James 1:8 δίψυχος, 3:1-12 “About the double tongue”.

mentioned above taken into account, there are still numerous examples from his study which could be given to support this view⁵¹⁰:

Table 4.2: Parallels between the Testament XII and the New Testament

Testament Ruben 4:8	εὔρεν χάριν ἐνώπιον κυρίου καὶ ἀνθρώπων [Joseph]
Luke 2:52	Καὶ Ἰησοῦς προέκοπτεν ἐν [...] χάριτι παρὰ Θεῷ καὶ ἀνθρώποις
Testament Levi 6:2	καὶ συνετήρουν τοὺς λόγους τούτους ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ μου [Levi]
Luke 2:19	Μαρία πάντα συνετήρει τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα [...] ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς
Testament Levi 6:11	ἔφθασε δὲ ἡ ὀργὴ κυρίου ἐπ' αὐτοὺς εἰς τέλος
1 Thess. 2:16	ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος
Testament Levi 8:2	τὸν στέφανον τῆς δικαιοσύνης ⁵¹¹
2 Tim. 4:8	ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης στέφανος
Testament Judah 14:1, 16:1	μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἴνῳ, Ἔστι γὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ [...] ἀσωτίας
Eph. 5:8	μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἴνῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἐστὶν ἀσωτία
Testament Zebulon 8:2	σπλάγχνα ἐλέους
Luke 1:78	σπλάγχνα ἐλέους Θεοῦ
Testament Zebulon 8:5	μὴ λογίζεσθε ἕκαστος τὴν κακίαν
1 Cor. 13:5	[Ἡ ἀγάπη] οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν
Testament Naphtali 3:1	Μὴ ἐν λόγοις κενοῖς ἀπατᾷν τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν
Eph. 5:6	Μὴ ἐν λόγοις κενοῖς ἀπατᾷν τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν
Testament Naphtali 7:4	Καὶ ἐκαιόμην τοῖς σπλάγχνοις
Luke 24:32	Οὐχὶ ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν καιομένη ἦν ἐν ἡμῖν
Testament Gad 5:7	Ἡ γὰρ κατὰ θεὸν ἀληθὴς μετάνοια
2 Cor. 7:10	ἡ γὰρ κατὰ Θεὸν λύπη μετάνοιαν
Testament Benjamin 4:3	ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν νικᾷ τὸ κακόν
Rom. 12:21b	νίκα ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ κακόν

Some comments could be added to the above table: passages from the Pauline epistles are included. Charles avers the following: “From the evidence presently to be adduced, it will be clear that Paul was thoroughly familiar with the Greek translation of the Testaments...”⁵¹². In addition, he supplies a list of 72 words which are held in common between the Testaments and the Pauline epistles, but which are not found anywhere else in the New Testament, from *aisthêsis* to *psômisô*⁵¹³. From all these data it has to be concluded that the Testament XII exercised a significant influence on some authors of the New Testament⁵¹⁴. Before proceeding

⁵¹⁰ Charles, *Testaments* lxxvii-xcii.

⁵¹¹ “The Testaments give the earliest use of this phrase”, Charles, *Testaments* lxxxix.

⁵¹² Charles, *ibid.* lxxxv.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.* lxxxix.

⁵¹⁴ In one of the concluding critical appendices in Nestle-Aland’s Greek-English New Testament (2008), “LOC CITATI VEL ALLEGATI” (772-808), 16 examples of apparent quotations from the XII are listed (807-808). To this

to the next matter, one more observation should be made: except for mentioning *splangchna eleous*, Charles makes no further mention of any occurrences of nominal or verbal forms of *splangchn-* which are shared by the XII and the New Testament, something which is rather perplexing. Even accounting for the possibility that he did not give preference to single terms, the fact that virtually all the inflections and range of meanings of *splangchn-* in the New Testament have their antecedents for the first and only time in the Testaments⁵¹⁵ could perhaps have been accorded some comment. This may also be taken as a small example of the lack of recognition that the mercy motto has had in theology over the years (his work dates from 1908).

In the foregoing passage, the influence that the Testament XII had on the New Testament in general was surveyed. Next, the particular significance of the Testament of Zebulon with regard to the neotestamentic usage of *splangchn-* will receive attention. The central theme of this Testament is “compassion”. In the span of 10 relatively short chapters (76 verses altogether) the concept *splangchn-* is mentioned 20 times, or in 18 of the 76 verses (of which twice in chapter 8:1, and twice in chapter 8:2), which is a percentage of 23%. More important than statistics are the following aspects, some of which were already mentioned in previous sections, but will here be reviewed and integrated with other items.

It is in the Testament Zebulon that, from a conceptual perspective, the term *splangchn-* undergoes a metamorphosis. When referring to physically-felt emotions (as for example in chapter 2:2 and 2:4), it has its conventional figurative guise shared with non-religious Greek literature. We have seen that from this shared position, a progression is started in which the semantic range of the concept is increasingly amplified, via the point at which it does not need auxiliary terms anymore when assuming a verbal guise (thus for all practical purposes replacing those terms) until it is ultimately sublimated into a personification of God. What is more, this process does not only take place on a semantic niveau, but also on a theological niveau: *splangchn-*, especially in its personified form, has become invested with eschatological significance. As a corollary to this eschatological investment, there is also a universalist connotation which becomes associated with the terminology: in the last times, when the Mercy of the Lord will become apparent, it will not only be to the benefit of Israel, but of all the nations, a theme which is a refrain in many of the Testaments. An essay will be made at a later point in this study to show that this universalist perspective also found currency in

list may be added two further examples, namely Test. Zeb. 8:2,6 – Luke 1:78 which is a clear parallel, and Test. Napht. 7:4 – Luke 24:32.

⁵¹⁵ The only exceptions are σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί (Phil. 2:1), σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ (Col. 3:12) and πολύσπλαγχνός...καὶ οἰκτίρων (James 5:11).

the New Testament, that Jesus adopted this perspective, and that the concept of *splangchn-* was one of the vehicles to convey this inclusivist and all-encompassing message.

A further remarkable theological development takes place in Zebulon: not only does *splangchn-* become the substitute for the Greek terms *oiktirmôn* and/or *eleêmôn* which constituted the first two epithets for God in the mercy motto (ἐλεήμων ἐστὶ καὶ εὐσπλαγχνος, Zebulon 9:7); for the first time, these divine epithets (with *oiktirmôn* replaced by *eusplangchnos*) are now applied to humans⁵¹⁶. The divine compassion should be emulated by humans; this mutuality or reciprocity is most patent in Zebulon 8:1 “You also, my children, have heartfelt compassion and mercy towards everyone so that the Lord may be deeply compassionate and merciful to you”⁵¹⁷. It is almost as though the initiative lies with humans to “activate” God’s compassion by being compassionate themselves, a notion that is a novelty compared with the traditional Jewish thinking about God’s mercy being the wellspring and originator of any human compassion. A comparison of the use of the divine epithets in respectively Testament Simeon 4:4 and Zebulon 9:7 evidences the same interchangeability: in Simeon, Joseph is called εὐσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων, being bestowed with the divine attributes, while Zebulon refers to God as ἐλεήμων ἐστὶ καὶ εὐσπλαγχνος. This is another new theological trend which is continued in the New Testament⁵¹⁸ and which will be investigated later⁵¹⁹.

The above observations also lead to a further insight which has to be highlighted: it is hardly possible to refer to the usage of *splangchn-* in Zebulon without summoning a conception of the grace motto (which is after all the motive of this study). In nine instances, *splangchn-* is combined with inflections of *ele-*, a combination which clearly has its precedent in the first word-pair of the mercy motto. In seven cases, the verb is used independently, being deemed semantically adequate to signify what previously required co-opted terms, as was pointed out in earlier discussion. It is safe to say that the mercy motto of the Old Testament serves as matrix for the Testament of Zebulon and for the further unfolding of the meanings of the term *splangchn-* which is effected specifically in this Testament. To support this opinion, one could offer a final motivation: one could see the mention of the grace formula in Zebulon 9:7 as the culmination point of his entire farewell speech, which ends in chapter 9 (with 9 verses). Up to that point, he has already mouthed the term *splangchn-* 18 times. This repeated usage creates

⁵¹⁶ 13 times in Test. Zeb.: 4:2, 5:1, 5:3&4, 6:4, 7.1-4, 8:1a, 8:3&4, 8:6.

⁵¹⁷ ἔχετε εὐσπλαγχνίαν κατὰ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐν ἐλέει, ἵνα καὶ ὁ κύριος εἰς ὑμᾶς σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐλεήσῃ ὑμᾶς.

⁵¹⁸ Cf. the appeal of Jesus in Luke’s Sermon on the Plain (6:36): “Be merciful just like your Father is merciful to you” (but with *oiktirmones* and *oiktirmôn* used).

⁵¹⁹ For the sake of completeness, it should be mentioned that Psalm 112:4, the first two epithets of the mercy motto are allocated to the righteous man, but the reading may be problematic. In the discussed two verses in Proverbs this application of a divine epithet to humans is only “hinted at” according to Köster (“Σπλάγχνον, σπλαγχνίζομαι...” 552). Ps. 112 is also one of the late Psalms as mentioned before.

a *crescendo* which culminates in his recital of the mercy formula in chapter 9:7⁵²⁰. It is a culmination and a summation of his entire homily on compassion⁵²¹. After this culmination point, the narrative winds down to instructions about the disposal of his body and other practical matters. The same literary technique can be found in other documents of the period; later it will be argued that the allusion to the mercy motto in James 5:11 could possibly likewise be seen as the *summa* of his entire letter.

There is a final theological aspect of Zebulon's Testament, also alluded to in the grace formula, of which account must be taken: in the previous chapter, it was repeatedly stated that the divine attributes of mercy and compassion which are united in the mercy formula are never mere emotions or attitudes, but are always actuated or made manifest. This theological aspect, which was described as evincing a "deed dimension", is also present in the Testament of Zebulon. Especially in its verbal guises, *splangchnizomai* denotes nothing less than a deep feeling of pity, but also much more: it is always activated into the accomplishing of concrete, interventive deeds. The matter could be formulated in a different way: whereas in some instances the usage of nominal forms of *splangchna* have no transitive orientation, no "recipient", but only refer to passive, intransitive feelings, in most cases, especially where verbal forms of *splangchnizomai* are used, its usage always signifies a transitive action of becoming involved in another person's plight and of doing things for them: through compassion (σπλαγχνιζόμενος), Zebulon gives fish to strangers (6:4). When he has deep pity (σπλαγχνισθείς) for a man who is cold and unclothed, he goes into action and appropriates a garment from his own house to give to him (7:1). When he is unable to give materially, he compensates and shows his involvement by walking a long way with the destitute person and weeping with him, while his innermost being (τά σπλάγχνα μου) is in turmoil out of sympathy (ἔῃς συμπάθειαν⁵²²) for him (7:4). He instructs his sons to "do"/"practise" *e/leos* to their neighbour (ποιεῖν ἔλεος ἐπὶ τὸν πλησίον; 5:1). He mentions that the "sons of his brothers" [sc. his brothers] did not "do"/"demonstrate" mercy to Joseph from the depths of their being (οὐκ ἐποίησαν ἔλεος ἐν σπλάγχνοις αὐτῶν; 5:1). More examples could be given; it would be sufficient to say that this usage of the term *splangchn-* is a recapitulation of the meaning of

⁵²⁰ This is the penultimate appearance of the term in Test. Zeb.: in the next verse (9:8), εὐσπλαγχνία is used in an eschatological ("last-day") context, which may explain why it was placed last in the Testament. This does not detract substantially from the climactic position that the mercy motto holds in the previous verse.

⁵²¹ The context of the formula in Zeb. 9:7 consists of the following: "And after these things you will remember the Lord and you will repent, and He will lead you back; for He is merciful and full of compassion."

⁵²² Zebulon's inability to help in a concrete, material way possibly contributed to his inner turmoil.

√*rh̄m* and related terms in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, *rah̄am* and *rah̄^amīm* “denote the act or expression of love rather than the emotion”⁵²³.

We have come the end of the discussion. The aim of this chapter was to find precursors to the usage of *splangchn-* in the New Testament, as one of the hypotheses of the present study is that this term, when found in the New Testament, alludes to the mercy motto of the Old Testament. We have seen how a concept which originally had an unrefined signification (σπλάγχχον/σπλάγχχνα “intestines/guts”, σπλαγχνεύω, “to eat the innards”) underwent a refinement until it was finally transmuted into the ultimate figurative signifier for divine personified and incarnated compassion. Accompanying this process of semantic refinement and enhancement was a process of theological amplification: the term could now encompass newer theological notions such as eschatology and universalism. The term also acquired an anthropological application which is indicative of a new development in Jewish religious thought: the divine epithets of mercy and compassion, often subsumed in a single term (various guises of *splangchn-*), are applied to humans as well. It is not a far-fetched notion that the Testament of Zebulon is the mediator between the Old Testament conceptions of God’s mercy and compassion, especially worded in the grace formula, and the New Testament conception of God’s compassion as it found embodiment in the words and deeds of Jesus. It is not merely a “testament” in the sense of instructions given about the disposal of property and body, but also a testament in the sense of “attestation”: it gives witness about the priceless value and meaning of divine and human compassion as signified by the term *splangchn-*. As a testimonial about heartfelt compassion, and in the wealth of its references to compassion it is a religious document unparalleled by any other document. The Jewish faith is the progenitor of the Christian faith. Of all the countless gifts bestowed by Judaism on Christian belief and concepts, there could hardly be a more valuable inheritance than the concept of *splangchnizomai*. This statement will be substantiated in the next two chapters.

⁵²³ Bultmann, “ἔλεος, ἐλεέω...” 480-481. According to Esser, the verbal forms of *ele-* are an expression of the “behelfende Betätigung dieses Gefühls”; Esser, “Barmherzigkeit” 52.

Table 4.3: Occurrences of *splangchn*- in the Testaments of the XII Patriarchs⁵²⁴

Testament Simeon	Test. Levi	Testament Zebulon	Test. Naphtali	Test. Asher	Testament Benjamin
4:4 εὐσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων [Joseph]	4:4 ἐν σπλάγγχοις υἱοῖ αὐτοῦ	2:2 τὰ σπλάγγχνα Ἰακώβ 2:4 τῶν σπλάγγχνων μου 4:2 σπλαγχνιζόμενος 5:1 εὐσπλαγχνίαν ἔχειν 5:3 ἔλεος ἐν σπλάγγχοις 5:4 ἔλεος ἐν σπλάγγχοις 6:4 σπλαγχνιζόμενος 7:1 σπλαγχνισθεῖς 7.2 σπλαγχνιζόμενοι ἐλεᾶτε 7:3 ἐν σπλάγγχοις ἐλέους 7.4 τὰ σπλάγγχνα μου 8.1a ἔχετε εὐσπλαγχνίαν ...ἐν ἐλέει 8.1b ἵνα καὶ ὁ Κύριος σπλαγχνισθεῖς ἐλεήσῃ ὑμᾶς 8.2a τὸ σπλάγγχνον αὐτοῦ 8.2b σπλάγγχνα ἐλέους 8:3 σπλαγχνίζεται 8:4 ἐσπλαγχνίσθη 8.6 σπλάγγχνα ἐλέους 9.7 ἐλεήμων καὶ εὐσπλαγχνος 9.8 εὐσπλαγχνία	2:7 εἰς γέλωτα σπλῆνα 4:5 τὸ σπλάγγχνον κυρίου 7:4 Καὶ ἐκαιόμην τοῖς σπλάγγχοις ἀναγγεῖλαι ὅτι πέπραται	7:7 δι' ἐλπίδα εὐσπλαγχνίας αὐτοῦ	3.7 τὰ σπλάγγχνα Ἰακώβ 4.1 εὐσπλαγχνίαν

⁵²⁴ Apart from the usage of σπλαγχν- in the Test. XII, the present author was able to find (only) two more instances of its use in Jewish literature: Test. Abr. Version B 12:12, 13 οὐ σπλαγχνίζεται [Abraham] ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀμαρτωλοὺς ἀλλ' ἐγὼ [the Lord] σπλαγχνίζομαι ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀμαρτωλοὺς and Apocalypse Moses/The Life of Adam and Eve 1:9 ἐπίθετε γῆν ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς ὑμῶν καὶ κλαύσατε, δεόμενοι τοῦ θεοῦ ὅπως σπλαγχνισθῇ ἐπ' ἐμέ [Adam to Eve].

Chapter 5:

Relicts of non-verbal forms of *splangchn-* in the New Testament

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, a case was made that the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs is the progenitor of the usage of *splangchn-* in its various inflections and meanings in the New Testament. In the Testament XII, we have a conceptual referential framework for tracing the semantic unfolding and exposition of the term: with the literal usage (“spleen/intestines”) serving as point of departure, the initial step was to move from this literal meaning of the term, in various nominal or adjectival attires, to the figurative meaning of “affections/feelings” involving the entire person, also indicated by nominal or adjectival forms of *splangchna*. This “first-level” transferred meaning was superseded by a “second-level” figurative meaning denoting “bowels of compassion/heartfelt pity”, a semantic reach which was achieved by conjoining nominative or verbal forms of *splangchn-* and semantically-related “auxiliary” terms in various grammatical ways. The last step in this conceptual progression happened when verbal forms of *splangchnizomai* standing on their own were deemed semantically adequate to express what formerly needed a pair of terms, usually acting as a *hendiadys*, or even a grouping of terms. It must be reiterated that this unfolding is not to be perceived as a process which necessarily happened diachronically, as though the term was first used in a literal way, then in a “first-level” figurative manner, and then successively in its further-transferred meanings: arranging the usages of *splangchn-* in order of increasing significance is a conceptual process. All four abovementioned classes of usage in the New Testament have their antecedents in the XII; the only meaning which is not adopted by authors of the New Testament is the ultimate employment of the nominal cases (singular or plural) of *splangchnon/-a* as personifications of God. A last recapitulating remark could be made, namely that within the conceptual matrix offered by the XII when studying the occurrences of *splangchn-* in the New Testament, the Testament of Zebulon must be accorded a favoured place: 20 of the 27 appearances of *splangchn-* are concentrated there, so that this Testament could aptly be called the “Testimony of Compassion”.

Before commencing with a discussion of the occurrences of nominal and adjectival inflections of *splangchn-* in the New Testament, one consideration should be mooted: it would not be adequate simply to point out and discuss the instances in the New Testament in which inflections of the term *splangchn-* appear, and/or to relate these appearances with possible antecedents in the Testament XII or elsewhere. The object of the present study is after all to uncover relicts of the mercy motto in the New Testament, which means that it must be

demonstrated convincingly enough that some (or all) appearances of *splangchn-* in the New Testament are indeed resonating with the mercy motto of the Old Testament. The discussion will therefore be introduced with the following postulate: “Whenever the term *splangchn-* is employed in the New Testament to denote a ‘second-level’ figurative meaning, that of ‘deep-seated compassion’, the grace motto is implied or summoned.” The following line of reasoning will be offered to substantiate this axiom: it was already pointed out in Chapter 2, and repeated in Chapter 3 regarding methodology, that shortened formulas containing some of the terms of the grace motto in the Old Testament are deemed to represent the grace formula in its full format. Many examples were given; there is broad consensus that this is indeed the case, from footnotes in Bible translations (or originals) to observations in commentaries and mentions in theological works⁵²⁵. For this reason, it is safe to assume that, in the Testaments of the XII Patriarchs, the word-pair εὐσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων occurring in the Testament of Zebulon 9:7 is a “shorthand” reference to the grace formula, with *eusplangchnos* having replaced *oiktirmôn*, the term usually employed in the LXX⁵²⁶. It is but a small conceptual step to assume that the same applies to other grammatical constructions in which the word-pair appears: these constructions in which the two terms are closely bound are likewise suggestive of the grace formula⁵²⁷. One could therefore firstly deduce that wherever the terms *splangchn-* and *ele-/oikt-* are encountered as word-pairs conjoined in some grammatical way, the grace motto is implied. The line of reasoning can now be resumed: it became evident that the verb *splangchnizomai*, having already replaced *oiktir-*, gradually appropriated the meaning inherent in the remaining terminology *ele-* and was consequently deemed adequate to express the full meaning of “heartfelt compassion” previously indicated by the word-pair *eleêmôn* and *oiktirmôn*. This brings one to a further deduction which is perhaps not too large a conceptual step: if the verb *splangchnizomai* became an adequate semantical equivalent for what previously was a word-pair, namely *(eu)splangchn-* and *ele-* (parallel to the LXX word-pair *oikt-* and *ele-* in the mercy motto), it means by extension that it had also become an adequate semantic equivalent of the Old Testament *hendidays rahûm w^hhannûn* (translated in the LXX with οἰκτίρμων καὶ ἐλεήμων), the first two constituents of the grace formula which were often taken as representing the entire formula. Thus one arrives at the conclusion worded as a postulate at the beginning of the paragraph, namely that appearances of *splangchn-* in a word-

⁵²⁵ It was also mentioned previously that some scholars even find in the occurrence of a single term of the grace formula an allusion to the full formula, a *modus operandi* that should be viewed with caution, as there is no logical reason to suppose that, without exception, neotestamentical authors without exception used terms like *eleos*, *oiktirmos* or *charis* with the intention of referring to the mercy motto. Although single terms could not summarily be excluded, word-pairs or groupings will exert a greater referentiality to the grace motto.

⁵²⁶ The gradual replacing of *oikt-* by *splangchn-* was discussed in the previous chapter.

⁵²⁷ These grammatical constructions, the two terms being united by the use of *kai*, or through a Genitive, or through the use of *en* + Dative, were discussed in the previous chapter.

pair or singly, when denoting the “second-level” meaning of “deep stirrings of pity”, could very well be a citation of the grace formula. If the above line of reasoning is still seen as slightly tenuous, the following appeals could be made in conclusion: the first is that in Greek, the imported term *splangchn-* became the closest semantic approximation to the meaning of the Hebrew \sqrt{rhm} , capable of carrying a heavier semantic load than either the term \sqrt{rhm} or \sqrt{hnn} or their combination in a word-pair. It should therefore be accorded its due as a “semantically loaded” term. The second appeal is in the form of a hypothetical question: if a single Greek term were to be selected to represent the full ambit of meaning inhering the grace motto, what better term could be offered? *Aliter dicta*: is there any semantic nuance or additional meaning in the grace formula which is not incorporated in the term *splangchn-* when it is applied in a “second-level” figurative way in the New Testament?

We now come to a discussion of all the various appearances of non-verbal inflections of *splangchn-* in the New Testament. The 12 verbal occurrences of the term will be discussed in the next chapter. As in the case of the Testament XII, an effort will be made to give full quotations and not merely supplying a list of occurrences, as the semantics of the term will become apparent if it is placed within context. For the sake of synopsis, a table of occurrences will be provided at the end of the section.

5.1.1 *A nominal form of splangchna in a literal sense*

Acts 1:18 καὶ ἐξεχύθη πάντα τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ
 “...and all his guts were spilled out”

There is an analagous usage of a cognate of *splangchna*, namely σπλήν (*splên*, “spleen”) employed in a literal sense in Testament Naphtali 2:8, a verse which was already mentioned in the previous chapter⁵²⁸. The example from Acts of the plural noun *splangchna* need not detain us any longer, as it has no bearing on the figurative meanings of other nominal or verbal manifestations of *splangchn-*; it is mentioned for the sake of comprehensiveness⁵²⁹.

5.1.2 *Nominal declensions of splangchna standing alone and denoting a “first-level” figurative meaning*

In this section, inflections of the noun *splangchna* appearing on their own will be listed and discussed. Concluding observations regarding the entire group will then be given at the end of the section.

⁵²⁸ Chapter 4, subsection 4.2.2.1, fn. 456.

⁵²⁹ The only non-literal meaning that could be attached to the verse would be metaphorical: Judas’ gruesome end was a reflection of the gruesome choices that he made; in a kind of Jewish, midrashic way of thinking, his manner of death could be described as an outcome of his manner of life.

2 Corinthians 6:12 στενοχωρεῖσθε δὲ ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχνοις ὑμῶν
However, you are constricted in your affections [towards us]

In this quotation, *splangchnois* denotes inner affection, an affection that Paul feels the Corinthians lack. They are reserved in their fondness; the passive and intransitive verb στενοχωρεῖσθε indicates a diminishment or narrowing⁵³⁰. The meaning of *splangchna* in this context lies on a first figurative level, denoting the human seat of affection. This interpretation is supported by the verses encircling verse 12: in verse 11, the same metaphor is conveyed by usage of *kardia* (“our heart is wide open to you”)⁵³¹ a term often representing the full personality and congruous to *splangchna* in verse 12, and also implied in verse 13 (“Likewise, open your hearts wide to us”)⁵³². One could summarise the meaning of what Paul is trying to convey as follows: “Corinthians, our hearts have always been open and receptive to you; will you not be likewise? So far, your disposition towards us has been reserved and unreceptive; small-spirited and petty-minded.”

2 Corinthians 7:15 καὶ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ περισσοτέρως εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐστίν
And his heart [Titus'] is even more inclined towards you

Again, the usage of *splangchna* in this context is first-level figurative, indicating feelings involving the entire personhood. In verse 13, Paul states that the spirit of Titus has been comforted by all the Corinthians⁵³³, with *pneuma* serving the same function as *kardia* in the previous quotation, being “grounded” in or referring to the concept of “psyche, inner being”⁵³⁴. To explain in another way: since *kardia* and *pneuma* are utilised as alternatives to *splangchna*, the last-mentioned term should “only” be understood as denoting feelings, just like “heart” and “spirit” are used in a transferred meaning to denote feelings. The view that Paul meant nothing more than “feelings” (but also nothing less) when he used “physiological” or “psychological” terms like *kardia* and *pneuma* in the above quotations, could also be supported by adducing another verse in chapter 2, where he refers to his (now lost second) letter to the Corinthians

⁵³⁰ In the *sten-* of *stenochōreō* one finds the origin of the medical term “stent” which is used to widen a constricted artery or vessel. Two chapters earlier (2 Cor. 4:8) Paul uses the same passive verb in a different inflection (Present Participle, Male Plural Nominative): ἐν παντὶ θλιβόμενοι ἀλλ’ οὐ στενοχωρούμενοι “We are pressed but not crushed/restricted but not constricted.”

⁵³¹ 2 Cor. 6:11 ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν πεπλάτυνται [πρὸς ὑμᾶς Κορίνθιοι implied].

⁵³² 2 Cor. 6:13 πλατύνθητε καὶ ὑμεῖς [ἡ καρδία ὑμῶν implied].

⁵³³ 2 Cor. 7:13 ἀναπέπαυται τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ πάντων ὑμῶν; cf. 1 Cor 16:18

ἀνέπαυσαν γὰρ τὸ ἐμὸν ἀνέπαυσαν γὰρ τὸ ἐμὸν πνεῦμα “for they refreshed my spirit”.

⁵³⁴ Köster, citing 2 Cor. 6:12, 2 Cor. 7:15 and the three verses from Philemon, states the following: “Like other anthropological terms, e.g. καρδία, νοῦς, the word [*splangchna*] is used in Paul for the whole man...”. He adds that the term is an expression of the “whole person” in the “depths of its emotional life”; Köster, “Σπλάγχχον” 554-555.

and mentions that he wrote it with “much affliction and distress of heart”⁵³⁵. The entire pericope from chapter 1:23 to 2:4 is a play between the contrasting emotions of pain and joy – deeply-felt feelings implied by his use of “heart”, but not correlating to the experience of “bowels of compassion”.

Philemon 1:7	τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπταται διὰ σοῦ ἀδελφέ The hearts of the saints have been refreshed/replenished/set at ease by you, brother.
Philemon 1:12	τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα He is mine own heart
Philemon 1:20	ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν Χριστῷ Refresh/restore my spirit/heart in Christ

In Philemon 1:7 and 20, τὰ σπλάγχνα is used with conjugations of ἀναπαύω, just as *pneuma* is used with conjugations of *anaupauō* in 1 Corinthians 16:18 and 2 Corinthians 2:13 (quoted above). Again, *splangchna* is a denotation for the “inner being” or the entire person, similar to the semantical function which the denotations *kardia* and *pneuma* (or their Old Testament equivalents *lēb/lēbab* and *nêfêš*) fulfil. Philemon 1:7 & 20 refer to the inner being which is being refreshed or replenished⁵³⁶. *Splangchna* has a first-level figurative meaning in these two verses.

In Philemon 1:12, we encounter a remarkable use of the plural noun *splangchna*: it is not only a type of personification through which Paul is trying to convey the fact that Onesimus has now become his very own heart, occupying the place which Paul's heart formerly occupied, and thus becoming Paul's “new heart”, it is also a very moving term of endearment⁵³⁷. Even though the dimension of “pity/compassion” is not implied in this usage, it nevertheless engenders a notion of unreserved and cordial affection.

1 John 3:17	καὶ κλείσῃ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ
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⁵³⁵ 2 Cor. 2:4 ἐκ γὰρ πολλῆς θλίψεως καὶ συνοχῆς καρδίας.

⁵³⁶ One is also reminded of a *logion* of Jesus in which the same verb is employed: κἀγὼ ἀναπαύσω ὑμᾶς “and I will give you rest”; Matt. 11: 28.

⁵³⁷ Although not a scholarly observation, some parallels of this usage of “heart” as term of endearment could be noted, such as the archaic expression of fondness “My hartjie” in Afrikaans, or as found in one of the Carols from *Ane Compendius Buik of Godly and Spirituall Sangis* (1567) by James, Johan and Robert Wedderburn:

O my deir hert, young Jesu sweit,
Prepare thy creddill in my spreit,
And I sall rocke thee to my hert,
And neuer mair from thee depart.

...and closes his heart against him [his brother in need]⁵³⁸

In this excerpt, we find a similar notion being expressed than in 2 Corinthians 6:12 (discussed above) with *splangchna* here joined with a conjugation of κλείω⁵³⁹, a verb which is analogous to στενοχωρέομαι, both denoting a sense of “closedness”. In John 3:17, a person is depicted who is reserved or “holding back”, somebody who, despite having all that is needed, has a disposition which is restricted: it is not open and inclined towards their fellow human who is indigent, and it does not want to become involved. It is this “internal attitude/mentality” which is expressed by *splangchna*⁵⁴⁰.

Philippians 1:8 ἐπιποθῶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ
I long for you all with the heartfelt affection of Christ Jesus.

In the light of the usage of the verb *splangchnizomai* in the Gospels (presently to be discussed), it is difficult not to attach the notion of “compassion” to any appearance of *splangchn-* when referring to the Person of Jesus Christ, as in the above quotation. At this point, it would be suitable to introduce a criterium which may help to distinguish between a “first-level” and “second-level” usage of the term, the two “levels” respectively referring to feelings/affections and compassion/heartfelt pity. This criterium would be in addition to the criteria laid on in the previous chapter to determine the semantic import of various usages of *splangchn-* in the Testament XII⁵⁴¹. To arrive at this suggested criterium, one must recapitulate some insights tendered in the first and second chapters of the present study: in a discussion of the constituent terms of the mercy motto, it was time and again pointed out that, even though the epithets used are adjectives and nouns, they should nevertheless be understood as “verbs”, and specifically verbs which have a transitive orientation, that is, which are directed to a recipient. The epithets denote what was termed the “divine deed dimension”: exuding a “verbality”, they are always actuated through manifest interventions on God’s part on behalf of the receiver. If one applies this principle to the usage of *splangchna* as it appears in the seven instances cited so far, the principle could be formulated thus: “For *splangchna* to acquire the further figurative connotation of ‘deep compassion’, it must at the very least exhibit a transitive orientation”. There must be a party on the receiving end, a recipient, and *splangchna* should thus also exhibit a “verbality” or a “deed dimension”, that is, suggest a deed that is to

⁵³⁸ The full verse goes “If whoever possesses life’s essentials and observes his brother having need, and closes his heart against him, how does God’s love reside in him?”

⁵³⁹ Aorist, third person Singular, in the Subjunctive Mood.

⁵⁴⁰ It is striking that Clement of Alexandria, in his admonition and exhortation to rich people (“The Rich Man’s Salvation”), refers to 1 John 3:15 in connection with verse 17, equating somebody who is miserly to a murderer, and adding θεοῦ σπλάγχνον οὐκ ἔχει “He does not have God’s compassionate heart” (“The Rich Man’s Salvation” section 37, line 26).

⁵⁴¹ The instances of *splangchn-* were ordered in categories of increasing semantic value; see Ch. 4.

be enacted to the benefit of a recipient. If this dimension is not present, it has to be accorded only (but also at least) a first-level transferred meaning⁵⁴².

With this criterium in mind, this section can now be concluded. In the case of Philippians 1:8, it now becomes more evident that *splangchna* cannot be accorded an amplified figurative significance. Paul refers to an affection which he experiences in himself, with *splangchna* implying an intransitive, “centripetal” state of mind; he has “internalised” the disposition of Christ (Subjective Genitive) and it is with this temperament that he thinks of the “saints” in Philippi. There is not enough in the context to adduce the meaning of “heartfelt pity”, or to adduce a specific recipient of compassion.

At this point, a small *excursus* must be undertaken: E.C.B Maclaurin states that the Arabic *al-ḥamdu lallahi arraḥmani arraḥīmī*⁵⁴³ “contains the attitudes indirectly posited to Jesus Christ in the phrase ἐν σπυλάγχνοις χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ” in Philippians 1:8⁵⁴⁴. This statement may however be too uncomplicated. Firstly, the conclusion that the term *splangchna* [*Christou Iēsou*] embodies the meaning of the two personified adjectives in the Arabic could only be arrived at by extrapolating, as Maclaurin himself implies by using the phrase “indirectly posited”. Secondly, there are similar phrases used in the New Testament which more closely resemble, or seem to anticipate, the Islamic usage⁵⁴⁵. Thirdly, he does not seem to take into account all occurrences of the term in various inflections in the New Testament. The title of his article indicates a study of the Semitic background of “En Splanchnois” [sic], implying a study of the nominal guises of *splangchna*, but he goes no further than these nominal appearances. However, it is the adjectival and verbal instances of *splangchn-* and more specifically their personifications which most readily lend themselves to be interpreted as possible allusions to the Old Testament mercy motto and then by extension to the analogous formula in Islam⁵⁴⁶.

This absence of semantic indicators is even clearer in the 3 verses from Philemon. In verse 7 and 20, *splangchna* is itself the “recipient”: it is the hearts of respectively the “saints” and Paul that are refreshed. *Splangchna* clearly has no “object” in grammatical or syntactical sense; it is itself the object or “Accusative” and could be typified as an “intransitive noun”. The same

⁵⁴² It is possible that the noun *splangchnon/-a* may have the *potentiality* to denote “compassion”, but in such a case, what is implicit would still have to be made explicit. This remark will be pursued in the next subsection.

⁵⁴³ “In the Name of –Il-h, the Merciful, the Compassionate” the motto/salutation at the beginning of all but one of the Suras of the Quran.

⁵⁴⁴ Maclaurin, Evan Colin Briarcliffe, “The Semitic Background of Use of ‘En Splanchnois’”, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (PEQ) 103 (London: Office of the Fund, 1971) 42.

⁵⁴⁵ Subsections 5.1.4 and 5.1.5 below will furnish four such examples. Also see fn. 495, p.136.

⁵⁴⁶ One such an instance is the personified adjectives in 1 Clement LX.1: ἐλεῆμον καὶ οἰκτίρμον, ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἀνομίας ἡμῶν (“O Merciful and Compassionate, forgive us our misdeeds...”).

applies to the remaining verse, namely verse 12: it signifies a deep affection within Paul for Philemon, to such a degree that his affection is subsumed in an “embodiment” of Philemon within Paul’s inner being, but it remains an intransitive concept; it is an “abstract” condition, not suggesting any recipient.

The same construction, namely *en splangchnois* with its subject, is also found in 2 Corinthians 6:12. Here, we are given sufficient semantic information to conclude without ado that *splangchna* has a non-transitive orientation and could therefore not qualify as indicating “compassion”. It is Paul’s clear complaint that the affections of the Corinthians do not exhibit any transitive orientation towards him: he is not in receipt of any cordial feelings from them. True affection would always be directed to its object; the disposition of the Corinthians is not.

In the excerpt just discussed, we saw that the Corinthians had demonstrated what *affection* “is not”. In the final excerpt, this “negative object lesson” acquires an added dimension: John’s hypothetical prosperous person shows what *compassion* “is not.” This affluent/“well-doing” person “does not” do good to their brother or sister who are in need. Their heart is “closed”; it does not display a transitive orientation towards the other. If only this well-faring person had practised welfare, had enacted practical care for the needy person, their “*splangchna*” would have qualified as being true compassion. In the present state, their *splangchna* is vitiated by the fact that their hearts are shut. We have here a case study analogous to the one in Proverbs 12:10 discussed in the previous chapter⁵⁴⁷: the *splangchna* of the irreligious man is pitiless; he is not sensitive to the condition of his animals, neither attuned to his fellow human beings. His inner being is not oriented towards recipients.

In the light of the abovementioned comments, one could conclude that the term *splangchna*, as it appears in the seven quoted verses, possesses a first-level figurative sense, that of “feelings” denoting the “inner being”. The usage of the plural noun *splangchna* in this sense is similar to and predated in the Testament XII⁵⁴⁸.

5.1.3 The adjective εὐσπλαγχνοὶ standing on its own

To a large extent, the above comments and the criterium which were tendered are also applicable to the next two examples which display an adjectival use of *splangchnon*, namely *eusplangchnia*. Some additional observations will be made after the quotations.

Ephesians 4:32 γίνεσθε δὲ εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοὶ εὐσπλαγχοὶ...

⁵⁴⁷ Chapter 4, section 4.2.1.1.

⁵⁴⁸ Test. Levi 4:4; Test. Zeb. 2:2, 2:4, 7:4, 8:2a [*splangchnon*, singular]; Test. Napht. 4:5 [*splangchnon*, singular, personified noun], 7:4; Test. Benj. 3:7. There are five further instances of the use of the noun *splangchna/en splangchnois*, all of them in Test. Zeb., but in apposition to *eleos*, to be discussed separately.

Become kind and well-disposed/tender-hearted...toward each other.

I Peter 3:8

πάντες ὁμόφρονες συμπαθεῖς φιλάδελφοι εὖσπλαγχοι...

Let all of you be of one mind, sympathetic, affectionate towards your brothers, well-disposed/tender-hearted...

The concept of *eusplangchnia* (abstract noun) was already discussed in the previous chapter⁵⁴⁹. Two main aspects of this terminology were pointed out. The first was that the concrete noun *splangchnon/-a* became an abstract noun, indicated by the suffix *-ia*, and the second was that the prefix *eu-* imbued the abstract noun with the notion of a “well-meaning/benevolent disposition”, if not denoting even more, namely the notion of compassion. Noteworthy about the two instances of this term quoted above is the fact that we now find an adjectival use of the noun, a usage which is anticipated in Testament Levi 4:4 and Testament Zebulun 9:7, referring respectively to Joseph and to God as being “compassionate and merciful” (*eusplangchnos kai eleēmōn*), as well as in the Prayer of Manasseh 1:7, where the singular of the adjective, εὖσπλαγχνος, is used as epithet for God in a recital of the full mercy motto⁵⁵⁰. “In this connection we find for the first time εὖσπλαγχνος and εὖσπλαγχνία for the human virtue and disposition of ‘pity’ [...] This anthropological use in Test. XII simply corresponds to a theological use in the narrower sense”⁵⁵¹. The question now is whether the use of the adjective plural in the two cited verses is an indication of a “mere” disposition or “mentality”, or if it possesses the additional significance of “compassion”. On the one hand, the adjective is one item in a list of attributes or characteristics required from a Christian, and as such has an “abstract”, “isolated” sense. On the other hand, if one applies the requirement of transitivity, both terms could be understood as signifying “heartfelt compassion”, as an object or recipient (in the Accusative) is explicitly named in the Ephesians 4:32 ([εἰς] ἀλλήλους, “[to] each other”), and implied in 1 Peter 3:8 (πάντες, “all of you”). Moreover, the added prefix *eu-* (“good/well”) is not insignificant: it imparts a specific quality to the adjective, a quality which would not be evident unless the adjective is “verbalised”, that is, actuated in concrete acts of beneficence. A possible synthesis of the alternatives might be worded as follows: *eusplangchnia* denotes the virtue and disposition of benevolence, a willingness and readiness to do good; through beneficence, doing good in act and fact, this attribute becomes manifest.

⁵⁴⁹ Section 4.2.2.1: Nominal forms of *splangchnon/-a* standing on their own.

⁵⁵⁰ σὺ εἶ κύριος ὕψιστος εὖσπλαγχνος μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος καὶ μετανοῶν ἐπὶ κακίαις ἀνθρώπων.

⁵⁵¹ Köster, “Σπλαγγχον” 551.

Some final remarks could be made: the usage of the noun *splangchnon/-a* on its own, denoting “feelings”, is predated in Proverbs 12:10 and the Testaments of the Patriarchs⁵⁵². The usage of the adjective *eusplangchnoi* has precedents in the Testament XII⁵⁵³ and the Prayer of Manasseh, in both documents used in the singular⁵⁵⁴. From the discussion, it became evident that it is the nomer *eusplangchnoi*, more so than *splangchnon/-a*, which most closely resembles the meaning of a “merciful heart”.

5.1.4 *Splangchna in apposition with eleos/oiktirmos*

Luke 1:78	διὰ σπλάγχνα ἐλέους θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἐν οἷς ἐπισκέπεται ἡμᾶς Through the compassionate mercy of God with which He has visited us.
Philippians 2:1	εἴ τις οὖν παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ...εἴ τις σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί ⁵⁵⁵
Colossians 3:12	ἐνδύσασθε οὖν ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ...σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ... Therefore clothe yourselves as ones chosen by God with deep-seated compassion.

The expression *splangchna eleous* found in Luke 1:78 has its only precedent in Testament Zebulun 7:3 and 8:6⁵⁵⁶. The phrase in Colossians displays the same grammatical construction, with the Genitive of *oiktirmos* now joined with *splangchna*. This construction was discussed in the previous chapter with regard to its usage in the XII⁵⁵⁷; its semantic object is to invest the concept of “inner being” or “deepest being” (*splangchna*) with the notion of pity in order to convey a meaning of “heartfelt pity” or “deep compassion”. It was also observed that the genitive constructions found in the XII, regarding which Luke 1:78 and Colossians 3:12 contain similar but later examples, are reminiscent of a similar Hebrew genitive construction found in

⁵⁵² Test. Zeb. 2:2, 2.4 & 7:4; Test. Napht. 7:4 [this example happens to have the same textual reference than the fourth example cited from Test. Zeb.]. For the discussion of these verses, see chapter 4, subsection 4.2.2.1, p.122-125.

⁵⁵³ Test. Sim. 4:4 (referring to Joseph) and Test Zeb. 9:7 (referring to God). In both cases, the attribute *eleēmōn* is coupled with *eusplangchnos*. Further discussion will follow.

⁵⁵⁴ Prayer of Manasseh 1:7, which is a recital of the grace formula with the adjective *eusplangchnos* replacing the standard *eleēmōn kai oiktirmōn* of the LXX. The Prayer and the XII may be roughly contemporaneous, or one document may predate the other. Information about possible datings was given in the previous chapter.

⁵⁵⁵ Possible translations of this verse will be tendered towards the end of the discussion.

⁵⁵⁶ Respectively ἐν σπλάγχνοις ἐλέους and σπλάγχνα ἐλέους. The first refers to humans; the second offers an interesting choice depending on whether ἔχει is understood as “has, possesses” or is understood as “receives”. If it is the first, the man who keeps record of the evil is the subject, if “receives” is chosen, God is the implied Subject/Giver. To clarify: this man either does not have compassion or will not receive compassion.

⁵⁵⁷ Joining *splangchna* grammatically and by extension semantically to related terms through the use of *kai*, *en* + Dative, or a Genitive.

later Jewish usage, for example in some Dead Sea scrolls. Köster singles out the expression σπλάγχνα ἐλέους and states that it is a “genitive combination...which is a literal rendering of the Hebrew *ḥasdē raḥ^amīm* [Hebrew script] (1QS 22) or *raḥ^ameē ḥesed* [Hebrew script] (1 QS 2:1)”⁵⁵⁸. Bultmann is of the opinion that *splangchna kai oiktirmoi* in Philippians 2:1 is “obviously a hendidays” meaning “heartfelt sympathy”⁵⁵⁹. This view will be annotated here: in a sense, the grammatical construction found in Philippians is “weaker” than the genitive construction found in the other two verses: *kai* (“and”) does indeed join the concepts of *splangchna* and *oiktirmoi*, but at the same time may lead the reader to understand the two terms as denoting separate or distinct concepts⁵⁶⁰. An alternative view, even though speculative, could be that the term *oiktirmoi* was added to ensure that a Greek term of “alien” origin (*splangchna*), used only once in the LXX⁵⁶¹, is not understood as indicating a mere sentiment, but is imbued with the sense of “deeply-felt pity”. If this is the case, it means that the two terms *splangchna* and *oiktirmoi* do not mutually define and enhance each other so much than that the denotational “flow” proceeds from *oiktirmoi* to *splangchna*, a possible procedure which was also mooted in chapter 4 regarding the usage of the noun *splangchna* in conjunction with terms like *eleos* in the Testament XII. Nevertheless, regardless of which interpretation is most feasible, one must maintain that the terms cannot be perceived as being fully independent of each other; they still stand together. At the very least they form a word-combination, if not a *hendiadys*. If the immediate context of Philippians 2:1 is noted, and if it is compared to Colossians 3:12, it becomes evident that the intended meaning is the same: both phrases appear in a “wish list” of characteristic qualities that a Christian should display (a “Tugendkatalog”)⁵⁶², one of which is an inclination to compassion. Regarding Luke 1:78 and the related (though not similar) wording in Colossians 3:12, it is worth mentioning that the “tender mercy” which Zechariah mentions in his prophetic Song of Praise (Luke 1: 67-80) is resonant with themes found in the Testament XII: in its eschatological wording that God has now visited (*epeskepsato*) his people and has made his compassion manifest, and in his imagery we find echoes of the same motifs developed in the XII. Some examples are the following:

⁵⁵⁸ Köster, “σπλάγχον” 552.

⁵⁵⁹ Bultmann, “οἰκτίρω” 161. Ditto Bauer-Aland, *Gr.-deutsches WB*, col. 1138.

⁵⁶⁰ See e.g. 1 Clement XXIII.1: Ὁ οἰκτίρων κατὰ πάντα καὶ εὐεργετικὸς πατήρ ἔχει σπλάγχνα ἐπὶ τοὺς φοβουμένους αὐτόν in which the 2 concepts *oiktirmôn* and *splangchna*, though related, seem to denote two separate, differing ideas.

⁵⁶¹ Proverbs 12:10.

⁵⁶² This word is not the author’s creation, but was encountered sometime during research. I was unable to find the original source again.

Table 5.1: Eschatology in the Testament XII

Levi 4:3,4	"You will shine like a bright light in Jacob, and like the sun you will be for the offspring of Israel...until the Lord shall visit [<i>episkepsētai</i>] all the nations in his compassion" ⁵⁶³ .
Zebulon 8:2	"Because also in the last days, the Lord will send his Compassion upon the earth, and wherever he finds compassion [<i>splangchna eleous</i>], there he will dwell" ⁵⁶⁴ .
Zebulon 9:8	"And after all these things the Lord will arise over you, the Light of righteousness, and healing and compassion are under his wings" ⁵⁶⁵ .
Naphtali 4:5	"Until the Compassion of the Lord will come, a man doing justice and exercising mercy to all who are far and near" ⁵⁶⁶ .

Here again, one comes under the impression that the Testament XII must have permeated the thoughts of not a few Jewish and early Christians authors alike. These excerpts are noted because of their eschatological and universalist orientation, a topic which will receive attention in later chapters.

Lastly, the discussion should be directed towards the rationale of this thesis, namely the question whether the mercy formula could be surmised from these three word-pairs. There are considerations supporting either view: the pair of terms used in all three verses are indeed suggestive of the first word-pair of the grace motto (*oiktirmōn* and *eleēmōn*, from the Hebrew *rahum* and *hannun*), with the first Greek term being replaced by the gradually more favoured term *eusplangchnos*⁵⁶⁷. A possible reservation regarding this opinion could be that in the case of Philippians 2:1 and Colossians 3:12, humans are the Subject of the word-pair, with the implication that it would therefore not be feasible to surmise the grace formula in these two cases, since the mercy motto, either in full or in abbreviated form, is used only with regard to God in the Old Testament. However, we have seen in the Testament XII that a short form of the grace motto which was used with reference to God in Testament Zebulon 9:7 was also used with reference to Joseph in Testament Simeon 4:4. It might thus not be out of the question to allow for epithets of the grace formula to be applied to Christians. Lastly: it is possible to conjecture that, when writing these words, the authors did not have the grace formula as referential in mind, but considered two options: the first to join two terms in order to ensure that the unified meaning of "a disposition of profound pity" is conveyed, or the second

⁵⁶³ ἕως ἐπισκέψῃται κύριος πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σπλάγχνοις αὐτοῦ. In some versions, "of his son" is added after "compassion". This is generally regarded as a later Christian insertion, and not present in older/more reliable versions.

⁵⁶⁴ ὅτι καί γε ἐπ' ἐσχάτων ἡμερῶν ὁ θεὸς ἀποστέλλει τὸ σπλάγχνον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, καὶ ὅπου εὕρῃ σπλάγχνα ἐλέους, ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ.

⁵⁶⁵ Καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἀνατέλλει ὑμῖν αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος, φῶς δικαιοσύνης, καὶ ἴασις καὶ εὐσπλαγχνία ἐπὶ ταῖς πτέρυξιν αὐτοῦ.

⁵⁶⁶ ἄχρι τοῦ ἐλθεῖν τὸ σπλάγχνον κυρίου, ἄνθρωπος ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην, καὶ ποιῶν ἔλεος εἰς πάντας τοὺς μακρὰν καὶ τοὺς ἐγγύς.

⁵⁶⁷ This process was discussed in chapter 4, point 4.2.2.1, p.125-128.

to represent two related but separate concepts by the two nouns, a choice which may be reflected in the use of *kai* (“and”) rather than the Genitive construction to join the terms. One could therefore conclude that the three instances that were discussed are strongly suggestive of the grace formula, but that some doubts could possibly still exist. This is the reason why a translation of the second quotation was not given above: if Philippians 2:1 is taken as a shorthand version of the mercy motto, the expression could be condensed into a single concept, analogous to the manner in which the pair of epithets in the mercy motto form a *hendiadys* conveying a comprehensive meaning: “If there is any consolation in Christ, any *heartfelt pity*...”. Alternatively, since the two terms found in Philippians are grammatically not as strongly joined as is the case with the Genitive construction used in the other two quotations, they may possibly be taken as conveying separate though related notions (the second option mooted). If so, a possible translation would be “...affection and compassion”⁵⁶⁸. This semantical ambiguity is however not the case with the next portion of the New Testament that will be studied.

5.1.5 *Polusplangchnos and oiktirmôn*

James 5:11

ὑπομονὴν ἰὼβ ἠκούσατε καὶ τὸ τέλος κυρίου εἶδετε ὅτι
πολύσπλαγχνός ἐστιν ὁ κύριος καὶ οἰκτίρων

You have heard about the long-suffering of Job, and you have
seen the outcome which the Lord intended, that the Lord is very
compassionate and merciful.

A few pertinent introductory comments will be given about the Epistle of James. Firstly, it is safe to assume that he must have been familiar with the Testaments of the XII. In chapter 4, similarities in wording and subject matter were already pointed out between passages in James and passages in the Testaments of Gad and Asher⁵⁶⁹. R.H. Charles has also identified parallels between James and the Testaments of Dan, Naphtali, Joseph and Benjamin⁵⁷⁰. Secondly, and also in the light of the aforementioned, he was in all likelihood Jewish, even if

⁵⁶⁸ Most translations prefer the second option: “tenderness and mercies” (21st cent. KJV), “tender mercies and compassions” (ASV), “affection and sympathy” (ESV), “tenderness and compassion” (NIV), “compassion and sympathy” (NRSV). The Message has “deep-spirited friends” which is a rendition closer to the second option. The variety of English terms utilised in translation again points to the problematics discussed in chapter 1, namely that the Hebrew terms *vrhm* and *vhn/vhnn* and the equivalent Greek terms *oiktir-*, *ele-* and *splangchn-* are not easily translated consistently in English (a phenomenon which could partly be ascribed to the versatility and immense vocabulary of the English language) and also Italian. In Afrikaans, Castilian, Catalanian, Dutch, French and German there is less variety and therefore more consistency.

⁵⁶⁹ Test. Gad 6:1 – James 1:22, Test. Asher 1:3, 3:1 – James 1:8, 3:1-12; see chapter 4, section 3 (“Conclusions”), footnotes 506 & 507. There is also a degree of correlation between Test. Zeb. 7:1f. and James 2:15-16.

⁵⁷⁰ Test. Dan. 4:5 – James 1:2, Test. Naphtali 8:4 – James 4:7, Test. Joseph 4:6 – James 1:27, Test. Benj. 6:5 – James 3:10; M.R. James, *Testaments* xc.

there is not consensus among scholars about authorship⁵⁷¹. His Jewish heritage is also reflected in Hebraic turns of phrase, an example of which is in the above-quoted verse, presently to be discussed⁵⁷². Noteworthy is the fact that the Letter of James contains more than 60 *hapaxlegomena*, 45 shared with the LXX, 22 with Luke-Acts, and only 9 with the Gospels⁵⁷³. Also striking is the fact that James is the only book in the New Testament which makes mention of Job, and also the only book in which Jesus Christ is not mentioned. Something else which is rather striking is that it is only in James and in the Gospel of Luke that we find curses on the rich⁵⁷⁴. In James 5:11, we find a concentration of several of the abovementioned aspects. For this reason, but also for other reasons, it has to be accorded an important position regarding a theme that is not only central to the Letter of James but is also a very important motif within the New Testament. An effort will henceforth be made to explain and substantiate this assertion.

This verse, set within a pericope about suffering, perseverance and the outcome worked by God (James 5:7-11), contains one of only two occurrences in the New Testament of the verb μακαρίζομεν⁵⁷⁵. It is the only place in the New Testament in which Job is mentioned, with reference to his patient perseverance (ὑπομονή) together with that of the faithful (those who are “called blessed/happy”). It contains the *hapaxlegomenon* πολὺσπλαγχνος (“full of compassion”) which is of special interest for the present study. The combination of *splangchna* with *oiktirmōn*, as well as the use of the adjective *oiktirmōn* itself, are likewise relatively rare in the New Testament⁵⁷⁶.

The wording that the Lord is filled with heartfelt pity and compassion is the focus of discussion in this section. However, it is necessary to place this phrase within the context of the pericope in which it appears and also within the context of the entire epistle. One of the key words of the pericope is *telos*, a concept which denotes purpose/intention and outcome/result. There has been some debate whether *to telos kuriou* contains a Subjective or an Objective Genitive.

⁵⁷¹ The present writer consents with J.B. Adamson’s well-motivated arguments that the author is James, the brother of Jesus; see James B. Adamson, *James. The Man and his Message* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) Introduction.

⁵⁷² Adamson is of the opinion that it is “certainly closer to the OT [sic] than any other NT book...”, Adamson, *James* 83.

⁵⁷³ Ralph Philip Martin, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 48, David A. Hubbard et.al., eds. (Waco: Word Books, 1988) lxx, and Peter Hugh Davids, *The Epistle of James*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 49.

⁵⁷⁴ Davids, *James*, *ibid*.

⁵⁷⁵ Present Indicative 1st Person Plural; the other occurrence is in the mouth of Mary in Luke 1:48: μακαριοῦσιν “will call [me] blessed”. There are 50 instances in the NT of the adjective μακάριος in various inflections.

⁵⁷⁶ There are only two further instances of *splangchna* and *oiktirmoi* employed together, in Philippians 2:1 and Colossians 3:12, discussed above. There are also only two further occurrences of the adjective οἰκτίρων and οἰκτίρμονες (both in Luke 6:36), an aspect which will receive attention in the present discussion.

In what is already an old article, Erwin Preuschen avers that the construction is undoubtedly an Objective Genitive, meaning “the ending/outcome [that God] planned for the Lord [Jesus]”⁵⁷⁷. François Vouga, on the grounds that *kurios* in James often refers to Jesus, is also of the opinion that the phrase is a reference to Jesus, and not to Job⁵⁷⁸. Preuschen attempts to motivate his statement by proffering the hypothetical Genitive construction *hê nosos tou paidiou* (“the sickness of the slave”), claiming that as little as this phrase could mean “the sickness caused by the slave” (sc. Subjective Genitive), as little could *to telos tou kuriou* mean “the end caused by the Lord”. This reasoning is tenuous: firstly, his hypothetical phrase could indeed be perceived as being a Subjective Genitive, for example if the slave had prepared spoiled food and consequently caused illness in the partakers of the meal. Secondly, it would not make much sense to have two occurrences of *kurios* in such proximity (τὸ τέλος κυρίου εἶδετε ὅτι πολὺσπλαγχνός ἐστιν ὁ κύριος) but referring to two different Subjects. The last-mentioned reservation is also applicable to Vouga’s view. In this respect, he also makes rather a conceptual leap by saying that James’ use of “endurance” in this verse (τὴν ὑπομονὴν ἰὼβ) is also a reference to the endurance of Christ⁵⁷⁹. There is insufficient intra- or intertextual evidence for this opinion. Martin Dibelius states categorically that “an interpretation that finds Jesus in Jas 5:11 is out of the question”, pointing out the traditional Jewish character of the examples that James uses, the “rigidity” (that is the conservative bent) of such tradition, and the fact that the good outcome of the story/life of Job is called an “end” (*telos*, or Hebrew *sûf*) in other texts⁵⁸⁰. The pericope in James 5:7-11 deals with the notion of patience (μακροθυμία, which appears four times in different verbal or nominal inflections; verses 7,8,10) and endurance or related concepts (κακοπάθεια, verse 10, ὑπομένειν and ὑπομονή, verse 11). This patience and long-suffering will finally be transmuted into an experience of God’s deep compassion and mercy. If it were not for this purpose and design on the part of God, and the outcome worked by Him, the endurance of Job and of the blessed would be in vain, without any content. Davids also refers to “analagous examples of τέλος κυρίου...which clearly mean ‘the result the Lord produced’ or ‘the result of the life of the person’...”⁵⁸¹. Robert Foster states that there is debate among authors whether *telos* refers to the good outcome of Job’s life, or

⁵⁷⁷ Erwin Preuschen, “Jac 5:11”, *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde des Urchristentums* 17, Erwin Preuschen, ed. (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1916) 79.

⁵⁷⁸ *L’Épître de Saint Jacques*, Commentaire du Nouveau Testament, 2. Série, XIIIa (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1984) 136. He mentions Golgotha and the Easter event (“à Golgotha et dans l’événement pascal”) as the ultimate “*telos*”.

⁵⁷⁹ “...Jc [sic] renvoie ses lecteurs à l’endurance de Jésus lui-même”; *ibid*.

⁵⁸⁰ Martin Dibelius, *James*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1976) 246-247.

⁵⁸¹ Amongst others, he cites examples from Test. Gad (7:4, although the noun used there is not *telos*, but *horon*; ὄρον κυρίου), Test. Asher 1:9 (τὸ τέλος τῆς πράξεως αὐτοῦ εἰς κακὸν ποιεῖν), Test. Asher 6:4 (τὰ τέλη τῶν ἀνθρώπων δείκνυσι τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτῶν) and Test. Ben. 4:1 (Εἶδετε, τέκνα, τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἀνδρὸς τὸ τέλος).

to the disclosure of God's compassion and mercy, with the majority favouring the second view according to him⁵⁸². This seems like an invalid dualism which is posited: it is precisely in and through the good outcome or ending of Job's life that God mercy and compassion were revealed; the two dimensions cannot be set apart. In chapter 2, these "divine dynamics" were highlighted time and again: it was through experiencing real and manifest good outcomes in their lives that the individual Israelite or the collective concluded that their God is indeed merciful and compassionate, as worded in the grace motto. God's benevolence is revealed through his beneficence; the divine attributes find manifestation in divine activities. After all, the outcome or end result of God's purposes and of his mercy and compassion is the same: that all things work out for good in the life of believers. This is the rationale for James' addressees to be patient and persevering: the credo that God is compassionate and merciful, patient and full of lovingkindness and trustworthiness. There is no precursor to the use of *polusplangchnos* here⁵⁸³; James must be credited with creating a neologism, but a neologism in which is encompassed the full meaning of the grace formula⁵⁸⁴. It is possible that James created this new word thanks to the prior use of *eusplangchnia* and *eusplangchnos* in the Testament XII, but a ready explanation is closer at hand: his use of *polu-* prefixed to *splangchnos* is akin to the terminology found in the LXX version of the mercy motto, specifically in regard the motto's last portion (Psalm^{LXX} 85:15/Psalm 86:15):

κύριος ὁ θεὸς οἰκτίρμων καὶ ἐλεήμων μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος καὶ ἀληθινός.

It is further clear that *polu-* ("much") is the translation of the Hebrew *rab-*, and that *polueleos* is analogous to *rab-hesed*, still displaying the Hebraic construction. Another question is which epithet in the grace motto is represented by James' neologism. The epithet *polueleos* seems a likely possibility, but in all other cases in which abbreviated versions of the mercy motto,

⁵⁸² Robert J. Foster, *The Significance of Exemplars for the Interpretation of the Letter of James* [Monograph], WUNT 2. Reihe 376 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2014) 152.

⁵⁸³ Vouga, *Épître* 136 calls it a term "unique/characteristic to early Christianity" ("un terme propre au christianisme primitif"). There is only one extant later occurrence of *polusplangchnos*, and that is in the Shepherd of Hermas, Commandment (Εντολή, Mandate) IV.iii.5: πολὺσπλαγχνος οὖν ὢν ὁ κύριος. We find *splangchnos* with a double prefix in Sheph. Herm. Parable (παραβολή, Similitude) V.iv.4: ὁ δὲ κύριος πολυεὺσπλαγχνός ἐστι (the wrong reference, "Herm. Sim. 5.7.4" instead of 5.4.4 is given in Dibelius, *James* 248). In Sheph. Herm. Par. VIII.vi.1 we find the equivalent nominal form *polueusplangchnia*: "ἵνα ἴδῃς τὴν πολυεὺσπλαγχνίαν τοῦ κυρίου. Another example of "intensification" of a similar term by adding a prefix is *hyperoikteirōn*: ἡδὴ τὲ ὑπερουκτεῖρων ἡμᾶς ὁ κύριος; Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation to the Greeks VIII, 68P., line 17.

⁵⁸⁴ Another concept that intersects with notions of the grace formula (but as an opposite), is ἀνέλεος ("merciless/without mercy"; Jam. 2:13), which is also a *hapaxlegomenon* in the NT and another neologism created by James. It may be the product of wordplay or punning, which is quite often employed by James: verse 13 starts with κρίσις ἀνέλεος and ends with ἔλεος κρίσεως, so that there is not only poetic alliteration and assonance but also a chiasmic "framing" using the same two concepts, but having opposite meanings. In the Testament of Gad we find cognates of James' term: Test. Gad 2:1 ἀνελεῖν; 5:11 ἀνελεῶς. This may be additional proof that James knew the Test. XII.

consisting of a word-pair, are used, the word-pair consists of epithets which are contiguous in the mercy motto (either “merciful and compassionate”⁵⁸⁵, or “patient and full of steadfast love”⁵⁸⁶), so that it is safer to assume that *polusplangchnos* represents one of the epithets in the first word-pair of the grace motto, and thus is a replacement of *eleēmôn*, and, by extension, of the Hebrew epithet *ḥannûn* (חַנּוּן)⁵⁸⁷. This is a further interesting aspect: it was pointed out earlier that the epithet *oiktirm-* was gradually replaced by *splangchn-* and therefore occurs relatively few times in the New Testament⁵⁸⁸. There is only one other instance of the use of the adjective *oiktirmôn* (referring to God), together with its plural *oiktirmones* (referring to the disciples) in the entire New Testament, and that is by Jesus in Luke 6:36⁵⁸⁹. If it is assumed that the term *oiktirm-* was gradually discarded in favour of *splangchn-* and that this therefore is a relatively late development, the fact that James still uses this term could be an indication of an early date of writing, and thus serve as confirmation that the author was James, the brother of Jesus⁵⁹⁰. Fact is that the term is found only in the mouth of Jesus and of James, even if in a Greek guise⁵⁹¹.

In the previous subsection, where occurrences of the noun *splangchna* joined with *eleos* or *oiktirmoi* were discussed, the conclusion was made that these three cases are in all probability shortened forms of the mercy motto, but the proviso was also mooted that there could be other feasible explanations for the occurrence of these word-pairs. However, the phraseology found in James 5:11 is undoubtedly an allusion to the mercy motto of the Old Testament. Three arguments will be offered to support this view. The first one is that the immediate context of the quotation establishes this fact. As mentioned, in the pericope in which the quotation is placed, just like at the opening of his letter, James exhorts the “brethren” to patience and perseverance. They experience trials (*peirasmoi*, 1:2, 1:12) and their faith is undergoing a test

⁵⁸⁵ 2 Chron. 30:9, Neh. 9:31, Ps. 111:4, 112:4.

⁵⁸⁶ Num. 14:18, Micah 7:18.

⁵⁸⁷ The order of the epithets within the first word-pair is sometimes reversed. With regard to the six appearances of the mercy motto in its full form, *rahûm* comes first in Ex.34:6, Ps. 86:15 and 103:8, *ḥannun* first in Neh. 9:17, Ps. 145:8, Jonah 4:2 and Joel 2:13. In the LXX, *oiktirmôn* stands first in Ex. and the 3 Psalms and *eleēmôn* first in Neh., Jonah and Joel.

⁵⁸⁸ “The combination of *hesed* and *rah^amîm*...no longer corresponds to ἔλεος and οἰκτιρμοί as in the LXX.. but to ἔλεος and σπλάγγνα”, and “The translation of *rah^amîm* by σπλάγγνα...also explains why the common οἰκτιρμοί etc. of the LXX are so notably rare in the NT...”; Köster, “Σπλάγγον” 552.

⁵⁸⁹ γίνεσθε οἰκτίρμονες καθὼς καὶ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν οἰκτίρων ἐστίν “Be merciful just as your Father is merciful.”

⁵⁹⁰ In the opinion of Adamson, the Epistle of James reflects a “pre-christological stage” which is still “untouched by complex dogmatic reflections”, a “pre-Pauline” and “proto-apostolic” phase, Adamson, *James* 31-33.

⁵⁹¹ Although the thought would not easily bear scholarly scrutiny, the present author cannot but wonder if this shared usage might not go back to a religious vocabulary shared between brothers and members of a family. The fact that Jesus and James would have spoken Aramaic does not preclude their use and/or knowledge of Greek, either as colloquial language or through knowledge of the LXX and other Jewish pseudepigrapha written in Greek, like the Testaments of the XII Patriarchs.

(*dokimion*, 1:3, *dokimos*, 1:12)⁵⁹². To support and exhort them, in the pericope under discussion James gives them a *paradeigma* in the person of Job, who remained patient and steadfast, and in the end experienced the good outcome worked by God, a God who, in turning Job's fate around, showed himself to be "very compassionate and merciful". Here we are in the heart of Old Testament Jewish belief: Israel's God is not a God who simply "feels" compassion; his disposition of mercy is always made manifest in the wondrous works and the mighty marvels that He works in the life of believers. An attempt was made in chapters 1 and 2 to demonstrate that this deep-founded belief received encapsulation in the mercy motto. It is in this frame of mind that James concludes his example of Job with a shorthand quotation of the mercy formula. Just as Job experienced that God's compassion and mercy had the ultimate say in his life, so believers may steadfastly and patiently wait for the turnaround in events which God will finally bring about.

This leads to the second consideration for accepting the wording in James 5:11 as a recapitulation of the grace motto: this verse, and the quotation of the grace motto in the verse, can be shown to be in the centre of the message of his entire letter⁵⁹³. Commentators have differing opinions about the central theme of James. Some authors find in the faith – works "binary" the fundamental theme. A representative of this view is Adamson, who states that the "motif, or theme, of the Epistle of James is 'faith at work'"⁵⁹⁴. However, the most convincing view is that the fundamental message of the epistle is the theme of *teleios*. The term means "completed", "perfected", "fully developed", "mature"⁵⁹⁵, "accomplished", and together with related terms like *holos*⁵⁹⁶ and *holoklēroi*⁵⁹⁷ as well as their opposites like *diakrimenos*⁵⁹⁸, *dipsuchos*⁵⁹⁹ and *akatastatos*⁶⁰⁰, is used by James to state the main intent of his letter: that the "brethren" may be perfected and complete, lacking nothing (1:4). The term *teleios* is used

⁵⁹² This is apart from the fact that they seem to be the cause of suffering and trial themselves, as is clear from James' admonitory and almost minatory turns of speech in certain pericopes (2:1-13, 3:1-12, 4:1-10, 11-12). In the view of Wiard Popkes, this is the obvious reason why James does not mention the suffering of Jesus when he tries to encourage the recipients of his letter: in contrast to 1 Peter, Romans 6 and Colossians 2, where Christians are the suffering party, here they seem to be the persons causing much of the suffering! Wiard Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes*, SBS 125, 126 (Stuttgart: VKB, 1986) 201.

⁵⁹³ It must be mentioned that there seem to be some disparate sub-themes in the Letter which cannot easily be assigned to a central theme, but this disparity is understandable if one takes into account that any early Christian community/congregation would exhibit some "idiosyncratic" challenges depending on the composition of its members; *quot homines, tot sententiae*.

⁵⁹⁴ Adamson, *James* 267.

⁵⁹⁵ "Fully developed" and "mature" are translational options proposed by Davids; *James*, discussion of verse 1:4.

⁵⁹⁶ "Whole", "entire"; James 2:10; 3:2,3,6.

⁵⁹⁷ "Fulfilled, completed": James 1:4.

⁵⁹⁸ "Doubting", "being sceptical", "having reservations"; James 1:6, 2:4.

⁵⁹⁹ "Double-minded", "in two minds", "with a mind not made up"; James 1:8, 4:8.

⁶⁰⁰ "Unsettled", "unstable"; James 1:8, 3:8,16.

19 times in the New Testament, of which five occurrences are in James: 1:4 (twice), 17, 25 and 3:2. In addition, its cognates *telein* and *teleioun* appear in James 2:8 and 2:22. A somewhat simplified account of the message of James could be worded as follows: The “twelve tribes which are in diaspora” are undergoing various trials. These trials are a test for their faith and faithfulness. They must persevere and be patient, living a life of “integrity” in which there is no “duality”. This means that their thoughts and words must always find consummation in actions (1:22-25, 2:14-17, 18-26), that their faith cannot simply be an attitude, but must find expression in deeds, here also implying faithfulness. We have seen in earlier chapters that this is how God “operates”: his attributes are always made manifest in *opera magna*, in his great and marvellous deeds. The statement that “what He is, is what He does, and what He does, is how He is” is a midrashic extension of his Name *’eyeh ’asher ’eyeh*. He says what He does and He does what He says. It is because of this unity and consistency that believers’ “Yes” must be “Yes” and “No” “No”⁶⁰¹. There is never any dualism about God. It was maintained in an earlier chapter that the mercy formula contains the notions implied in the Names of God⁶⁰²: *YHWH ehad* signifies that He is one, whole, single, true, and together with the above Divine Name, it signifies that He is *teleios*. This is precisely the manner in which believers must also live: they must “practise what they preach/believe”; emulating God, they should not only feel sorry for their destitute sister or brother but do something. This unity of attitude and action, this consistency in “acting out” one’s inner disposition of pity by placing oneself at the disposal of others, finds its grounding in the character of God who, unlike the lights of heaven which come and go, undergoes no change, no waxing or waning (James 1:17). It is the grace motto that bears witness to this reality: God is *rab-ḥesed w^e’emet* or *polueleos kai alêthinos*: his lovingkindness does not come and go; it is true because it is trustworthy and always demonstrated through his wondrous deeds. This knowledge is the sole foundation and rationale of the believers’ patient perseverance: at long last, God in his compassion will bring about a turnaround in their circumstances. It is probably because of this perspective that Popkes can even declare that God’s unchangeability, constancy and consistency⁶⁰³ which play such a fundamental role in the Letter of James are transcended by his mercy and compassion⁶⁰⁴. He is complete because his attributes are always complemented by his

⁶⁰¹ We find the same notion, namely that God is faithful (πιστός, undoubtedly the equivalent of the Hebrew *’emet* which is used with *ḥesed* in the mercy motto) expounded by Paul: because God is trustworthy, what He says is trustworthy, and therefore one’s “Yes” must also be “Yes and one’s “No” “No” (2 Cor. 1:17-20).

⁶⁰² Chapter 2, section 2.5.1.

⁶⁰³ “Unbestechlichkeit”, “Eindeutigkeit” Popkes, *Jakobusbrief* 189.

⁶⁰⁴ “Aber zum Wesen Gottes gehören noch andere, letztlich wichtigere Züge. Vor allem ist Gott barmherzig; er will uns Barmherzigkeit erweisen und uns zu barmherzigem Handeln bringen” (“But there are still other, more important traits belonging to God’s being. Above all, God is merciful; He wants to show us mercy and lead us to act in mercy”); Popkes, *Jakobusbrief* 200. Luciano Lepore is of the same conviction: in an article about the

actions. This is why Jesus can expect the apparently impossible from his followers, that they be *teleioi* as their Father in heaven is *teleios*: it is not a question of trying to acquire the notional perfection of God, but by emulating Him by acting in compassion (Luke's alternative for Matthew's *teleios*) toward everyone. The epithets of the mercy motto are a synthesis of "mentality/attribute" and "activity/doing": without the one, the other is non-existent. It is the concept of *teleios* which serves as the unifying principle between "faith and works": the two aspects verify each other and are impossible to split. It borders on heresy to criticise a figure like Luther, the greatest of the Reformers and the greatest of the Lutheran theologians, for feeling alienated from the Epistle of James, but it is evident that he did not approach the letter with the appropriate hermeneutical tool: if he had reckoned with the unity of divine disposition and deed as it is witnessed in the grace motto, it would have enabled him to interpret the "faith – works" issue in James (which several commentators and authors see as one of the most problematical passages in the entire New Testament⁶⁰⁵) through the same lens: just as God does what He is, so should we practise what we preach. A last remark can be made: *telos* in James 5:11 is also a cognate of *teleios*. Their semantic spheres are not entirely separate but intersect. The concept which resides in this semantic intersection could perhaps be termed "consummation", or even by extension, "vindication"/"justification". Abraham's faith was not only consummated in his works (James 2:22-24); his works vindicated his faith. Thus he was justified and deemed a righteous man⁶⁰⁶. When James refers to Job in 5:11, it is with the assumption that here is a parallel example. Job's steadfastness and long-suffering were the outward manifestations of his trust in God. The outcome of Job's life story was that his trust and his trustworthiness were vindicated. The consummation of God's purpose with Job was that Job was deemed righteous. Characteristic to Jewish thought, there is a causality between sin and sickness/misfortune, or between being good and enjoying the good. The proof that Job was vindicated and justified lay in the good outcome that God worked for him in the end. One could say: God's *telos* with Job was for Job to become *teleios*: justified and righteous. It is only a God who is full of compassion and mercy Who acts like this. A last comment could be offered in this respect: the life of Joseph and the outcome of his story feature to a greater or lesser degree in seven of the 12 Testaments of the Patriarchs. In the Testament of Benjamin (4:1), Joseph is indirectly referred to in the words Εἶδετε, τέκνα, τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἀνδρὸς τὸ τέλος ("Behold, my children, the eventual outcome [*telos*] of the good man"). The *paradeigma* of

"Midrash of James", he states that compassion ("misericordia"; he also employs the terms "tenerezza" and "compassionevole") is the "architrave" in the life of the Church and should qualify its witnessing and all its actions, "Il midraš di Giacobbe in funzione del giubileo", *Bibbia e Oriente* 256 (Bornato in Franciacote: Sardini Editrice, 2015) 161.

⁶⁰⁵ See for example Davids, *James* 123, who concurs with Martin Dibelius about James 2:18-26.

⁶⁰⁶ "*Edikaiôthê*...refers not to a forensic act in which a sinner is declared acquitted (as in Paul), but to a declaration by God that a person is righteous, *ḥaddîq*..."; Davids, *James* 127.

Joseph figures strongly in late Jewish religious thought⁶⁰⁷. He is an example of a righteous man who remained steadfast and true amidst all the injustice and suffering that he experienced. The end result, the *telos* of his story, was vindication and a blessed, “happy” outcome for him (and for the nation of Israel). Likewise, those who were steadfast are called “happy” or blessed in James 5:11. We have already seen that James was well-versed in the Testament XII. We have seen that the Testament of Benjamin refers to the *telos* of Joseph. One is tempted to wonder whether James did not perhaps have Joseph in mind when he wrote the verse⁶⁰⁸.

After this rather lengthy discussion to point out the role of the mercy motto in the message of the epistle, a third and conclusive argument will be given to support the claim that James 5:11 is a quotation of the mercy motto. It was mentioned earlier that “the Lord” appears twice in close proximity in verse 11. From a grammatical and syntactical point of view, this does not make sense, even more so because James’ Greek is otherwise of the highest linguistic standard, of the best in the entire New Testament. A better way to have formulated the sentence would have been “...you have seen the purpose of the Lord, that *He* is very compassionate and merciful” (τὸ τέλος κυρίου εἶδετε ὅτι πολὺσπλαγχνός ἐστιν καὶ οἰκτίρμων; second κύριος simply omitted). The reason why there is a second mention of “the Lord” is obvious: it is because this appellation appears in the mercy motto (“Merciful and compassionate is the Lord”). James mentions the purpose of the Lord, and then quotes the grace formula as exhortation and *paraklesis*. This is the explanation for the second appearance of *kurios*. The remarkable situation is that some (but not even all) commentators and general theologians, when referring to 5:11 do mention that there is a connection with similar wordings in the Old Testament, but not a single one of those consulted cites all seven occurrences of the full formula in the Old Testament, or all five or six occurrences of the shortened formula. What is more, none mentions, or for that matter seems aware, that it is a standard motto which is quoted⁶⁰⁹. This phenomenon is mentioned as further proof for one of

⁶⁰⁷ One finds an analogous example in 1 Clement XLIV.5, where it is the elders who have passed away who are called blessed (*makarioi*) because they have received full release from their completed work (ἐγκαρπον καὶ τελείαν ἔσχον τὴν ἀνάλυσιν).

⁶⁰⁸ One is compelled to add that the Ultimate Example or *Hupogrammos* (ὑπογραμμός; cf. 1 Pet. 2:21) was Jesus, the truly Righteous One, whose last uttering on the cross, translated into Greek, was τετέλεσται (“It has been completed/accomplished”). Clemens of Alexandria calls Christ to *teleios*, “the Perfect One”; *The Rich Man’s Salvation* 6, line 6.

⁶⁰⁹ Adamson, in his commentary *The Epistle of James*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 193, only mentions Ps. 103:8. Davids, *James* 187 cites Ps. 103:8, 112:4 (which does not even refer to God) and Sir. 2:11. Dibelius, *James* 240 cites only Ps. 103:8. Foster, *Exemplars*, 159-160, gives 11 places, but only with reference to “οἰκτίρμων”, not to the word-pair, and omits Pss. 86:15, 103:8 & 145:8 and Jonah 4:2. Martin, *James* 196 refers to Pss. 103:8 & 111:4 and Ex 34:6. Arnold Meyer, in “Das Rätsel des Jakobusbriefes”, BZNW 10 (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1930) 121 mentions Pss. 103:8 and 111:4. Vouga, *Épître* 136 cites Pss. 103:8, 111:4, 145:8 Ex. 34:6,

the main contentions of this study, namely that the grace formula has not enjoyed sufficient reception as a central category within Old Testament Theology, New Testament Theology or Systematic Theology.

5.2 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, all the nominal and adjectival inflections of *splangchn-* that occur in the New Testament were listed and discussed. A striking aspect was that, outside the Synoptic Gospels, no verbal uses of *splangchnizomai* are found in the New Testament. We have observed that the nominal or adjectival usages appearing elsewhere in the New Testament are either literal, figurative in the sense of denoting the inner feeling and being, or further transferred to a higher level denoting deeply-felt compassion. All these usages are predated in the Testament XII, with the exception of the personifications of the adjective or noun of *splangchnon/-a*, a usage which is not adopted in the New Testament. It also has to be remembered that this usage of *splangchn-* in various guises does not have its antecedent in the Greek Old Testament, as the only instances of its use in the LXX are the two verses in Proverbs which might even post-date the time of writing of the XII. The most feasible explanation for the use of *splangchn-* in early Christian literature (New Testament and post-New Testament) is that writers tapped from another source shared with Judaism. If this is indeed the case, the Testament of the XII Patriarchs with its 27 representative examples of the use of *splangchn-* is almost the only candidate⁶¹⁰.

At this stage, it must already have become fairly evident that the nominal and adjectival instances of *splangchna* occupy a not insignificant position as theme or sub-theme in the New Testament. One has also gained the impression that, at least in some cases, there seems to be an implicit association within the minds of some New Testament authors with the mercy motto of the Old Testament. This association, and its relevance for a central theme within the New Testament, will be further explored in the last category to be discussed, namely verbal occurrences of *splangchnizomai* in the Synoptic Gospels.

Sir. 2:11 and Tests. Judah 19:3 and Zebulon 9:7. Josef Zmijewski, "Christliche 'Vollkommenheit'. Erwägungen zur Theologie des Jakobusbriefes", SNTU Ser. A:5 (Linz: [sin.loc.], 1980) gives no citations. The Nestle-Aland Greek Bible gives only Pss.103:8 & 111:4. Köster, "Σπλάγχνον" 556, does say the following: "The saying sounds like an OT quotation and is unquestionably a Greek translation of the common OT *rahûm w^ehannûn jhwh* [Hb] or similar Hebrew formulae". In fn. 56 (ibid.) he cites Pss. 103:8 & 111:4, Ex. 34:6; Jl. 2:13 (of which only three represent the full formula) but does not identify the grace formula as such. One hopes that these given nine examples will suffice to convince even a sceptical scholar about the inadequate recognition of the mercy motto in New Testament or general theology.

⁶¹⁰ With the exception of its single-time use (in verbal inflection) in respectively the Testament of Abraham B 12:12, 13 and The Apocalypse of Moses/The Life of Adam and Eve 1:9; verses quoted in chapter 4, fn. 117, p. 36.

5.3 Addendum: tables

Table 5.2. Occurrences of nominal and adjectival inflections of *splangchnon/-a* in the New Testament

σπλάγχνα	Acts 1:18	καὶ ἐξεχύθη πάντα τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ
	2 Cor. 6:12	οὐ στενοχωρεῖσθε ἐν ἡμῖν στενοχωρεῖσθε δὲ ἐν τοῖς σπλάγχνοις ὑμῶν
	2 Cor. 7:15	καὶ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ περισσοτέρως εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐστίν
	Philem. 1:7	τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπταται διὰ σοῦ ἀδελφέ
	Philem. 1:12	τοῦτ' ἐστίν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα
	Philem. 1:20	ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν Χριστῷ
	1 John 3:17	καὶ κλείσῃ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ
	Philipp. 1:8	ὡς ἐπιποθῶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ
σπλάγχνα	Luke 1:78	διὰ σπλάγχνα ἐλέους θεοῦ ἡμῶν
plus	Philipp. 2:1	εἴ τις σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί
2nd term	Col. 3:12	ἐνδύσασθε ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ
εὐσπλαγχνος	Eph. 4:32	γίνεσθε δὲ εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοὶ εὐσπλαγχοι
	1 Pet. 3:8	τὸ δὲ τέλος πάντες συμπαθεῖς φιλάδελφοι εὐσπλαγχοι
πολύσπλαγχνός	James 5:11	πολύσπλαγχνός ἐστίν ὁ κύριος καὶ οἰκτίρμων

Table 5.3: Occurrences of *splangchn-* in patristic literature: Clement of Alexandria (“The Rich Man’s Salvation”), I & II Clement, Ignatius to the Philadelphians, Polycarp to the Philippians, The Shepherd of Hermas

σπλάγγνον	Herm. Sim. IX.xxiv.2	σπλάγγνον ἔχοντες ἐπὶ πάντα ἄνθρωπον
	Clem. Alex. “Rich Man” [RM] 37, line 26	θεοῦ σπλάγγνον οὐκ ἔχει, ἐλπίδα κρειπτόνων οὐκ ἔχει
σπλάγνα	1 Clement XXIII.1	Ὁ οἰκτίρμων κατὰ πάντα καὶ εὐεργετικὸς πατήρ ἔχει σπλάγνα ἐπὶ τοὺς φοβουμένους αὐτόν
	Clem. Alex. RM 41:17	οὐ γὰρ ἀντέχει τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτοῦ τὰ σπλάγνα δεομένοις
	Ignat. to Philad. X.1	κατὰ τὰ σπλάγνα, ἃ ἔχετε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
εὐσπλαγχνία	Herm. Mand. IX.2	καὶ γνώση τὴν πολλὴν εὐσπλαγχνίαν αὐτοῦ
πολυσπλαγχνία	Herm. Vis. I.iii.2	ἡ πολυσπλαγχνία τοῦ κυρίου ἠλέησέν σε
	Vis. II.ii.8	διὰ τὴν πολυσπλαγχνίαν ἴλεως ἐγένετο αὐτοῖς
	Vis. IV.ii.3	ἀλλὰ τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ κυρίου καὶ τῇ πολυσπλαγχνίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἐξέφυγον αὐτό
πολυευσπλαγχνία	Herm. Sim. VIII.vi.1	ἵνα ἴδῃς, φησί, τὴν πολυευσπλαγχνίαν τοῦ κυρίου
εὐσπλαγχνος	1 Clement XXIX.1	ἀγαπῶντες τὸν ἐπιεικῆ καὶ εὐσπλαγχνον πατέρα ἡμῶν
	LIV.1	Τίς οὖν ἐν ὑμῖν γενναῖος, τίς εὐσπλαγχνος
εὐσπλαγχνοι	Polyc. to Philipp. V.2	ὁμοίως διάκονοι... εὐσπλαγχνοι
	Polycarp. To Philipp. VI.1	Καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι... εὐσπλαγχνοι
πολύσπλαγχνος	Herm. Mand. IV.iii.5a	πολύσπλαγχνος οὖν ὦν
	Clem. Alex. RM 39:30	ὁ ἀγαθὸς πατήρ «πάσης παρακλήσεως» ὁ πολύσπλαγχνος καὶ πολυέλεος
πολυεύπλαγχνός	Herm. Sim. V.iv.4	ὁ δὲ κύριος πολυεύπλαγχνός ἐστι
σπλαγχνισθεῖς	2 Clement I.7	ἠλέησεν γὰρ ἡμᾶς καὶ σπλαγχνισθεῖς ἔσωσεν
	Herm. Sim. VIII.xi.1	ὅτι ὁ κύριος ἔπεμψε με σπλαγχνισθεῖς πᾶσι δοῦναι τὴν μετάνοιαν
ἐσπλαγχνίσθη	Herm. Vis. III.xii.3	ὅτι ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς
	Herm. Mand. IV.iii.5b	ὁ κύριος ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπὶ τὴν ποιήσιν αὐτοῦ
	Herm. Sim. VIII.vi.3	καὶ δοξάσῃ τὸν κύριον, ὅτι ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπ’ αὐτοῦς
	Sim. IX.xiv.3	ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ
σπλαγχνισθήσεται	Herm. Sim. VII.4	πάντως σπλαγχνισθήσεται ὁ τὰ πάντα κτίσας

Chapter 6: Σπλαγχνίζομαι in the Synoptic Gospels

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, all the *nominal* and *adjectival* occurrences of *splangchn-* in the New Testament were discussed. A few aspects about these occurrences were notable: the noun appeared 14 times, always in the plural (*splangchna*), in 11 cases alone-standing, and in three cases joined to an additional “auxiliary” noun, namely *eleos* once and *oiktirmoi* twice. Adjectival forms were utilised three times, in all three cases with a prefix (*eusplangchnoi*, plural adjective referring to humans, twice, and *polusplangchnos*, singular adjective referring to God, once). In contrast to the use of the noun *splangchna* and its three adjectives with prefix in the rest of the New Testament, only verbal forms of *splangchnizomai* are found in the Synoptic Gospels, with the single exception of Luke 1:78⁶¹¹. All 12 instances of the verbal use of *splangchnizomai* in Mark, Matthew and Luke either occur with Jesus as Subject (8 times), with Jesus as the Narrator (3 times), or with Jesus as the intended Subject (once, in an plea directed to Jesus). These phenomena make the usage of the verb in the Synoptici unique. There is another aspect which makes these verbal occurrences remarkable. In chapter 3, an essay was made to demonstrate that, within the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, a conceptual unfolding of the meaning of *splangchn-* could be observed, with one of the products of this semantic evolution being the “emancipation” of the verbal forms, so that they could be used on their own, without the need to adduce other notions for the sake of semantic bolstering. This is without much doubt the usage which is continued in the Synoptic Gospels: the verb on its own is deemed to be a semantically adequate term to denote heartfelt compassion and pity. Although he does not make the distinctions regarding the semantic “evolution” of the term which were sketched in chapter 3, Köster refers to the use of σπλαγχνίζομαι in general in the Synoptici, and states that the “usage of Test. XII is continued here” and that, in contrast to the XII in which humans could be the Subject of *splangchnizomai*, in the Synoptici the verb *splangchnizomai* has finally become “solely and simply an attribute of the divine dealings”⁶¹².

⁶¹¹ There is no occurrence of *splangchn-* in the Gospel of John.

⁶¹² Köster, “Σπλάγχχον” 553. He remarks that this usage is continued in the only early Christian writing which also employs the verb *splangchnizomai*, namely Heras (Köster, *ibid.*). However, there is one occurrence of the past participle in 2 Clement 1.7 (σπλαγχνισθείς; see chapter 4, Table 2), an early Christian writing probably contemporaneous with The Shepherd of Heras (ca. 150 A.D.) to which Köster refers. See *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I (Loeb Classical Library) 127 (dating of 2 Clement) and *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. II (Loeb) 3 (dating of Heras).

For the sake of a synopsis of the appearances of *splangchnizomai* in the Synoptic Gospels, the following table is given.

Table 6.1: Occurrences of σπλαγχνίζομαι in the Synoptic Gospels

Verse	Setting	Verbal form
Mark 1:41	Jesus and leper	σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἤψατο
“ 6:34	Jesus and the crowd	ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ὅτι ἦσαν ὡς πρόβατα
“ 8:2	Jesus and the crowd	σπλαγχνίζομαι ἐπὶ τὸν ὄχλον ὅτι...οὐκ ἔχουσιν τί φάγωσιν
“ 9:22	Jesus and boy with a dumb spirit	βοήθησον ἡμῖν σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς
Matthew 9:36	Jesus and the crowd	ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἐσπλαγχνίσθη περὶ αὐτῶν
“ 14:14	Jesus and the crowd	εἶδεν πολλὸν ὄχλον καὶ ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς
“ 15:32	Jesus and the crowd	σπλαγχνίζομαι ἐπὶ τὸν ὄχλον ὅτι...οὐκ ἔχουσιν τί φάγωσιν
“ 18:27	Parable of the Unforgiving Servant	σπλαγχνισθεὶς δὲ ὁ κύριος τοῦ δούλου ἐκείνου
“ 20:34	Jesus & 2 blind men	σπλαγχνισθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἤψατο τῶν ὀμμάτων αὐτῶν
Luke 7:13	Jesus & widow	καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὴν ὁ κύριος ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπ’ αὐτῇ
“ 10:33	Parable of Good Samaritan	Σαμαρίτης...ἦλθεν κατ’ αὐτὸν καὶ ἰδὼν ἐσπλαγχνίσθη
Luke 15:20	Parable of Lost Son	εἶδεν αὐτὸν ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐσπλαγχνίσθη

6.2 *Splangchnizomai*: categories of employment in the Synoptic Gospels

In the above table one can see that the verb is used five times to depict Jesus’ compassion for the crowd(s), four times with reference to the way He interacted with persons in suffering or need (including the plea directed to Him with the Aorist Participle of *splangchnizomai*; Mark 9:22) and three times by Jesus in parables to describe the compassionate response to somebody’s loss or contrition. These three categories will now be discussed, starting with the five instances of Jesus’ interaction with the crowd (or “crowds”, Matthew 9:36).

6.2.1 *Compassion for crowds*

There are at least two aspects which make this category *sui generis*. Firstly, it is the only group of instances in which the Object of the verb is not an individual⁶¹³. We have seen that the only prior use of the verb is in the Testament of Zebulon, where it is always directed to an individual⁶¹⁴. In Mark and Matthew, Jesus is portrayed as experiencing deep pity for the

⁶¹³ In order to indicate the (direct) object/“recipient” of the verb, several grammatical constructions are used in the 12 cases under discussion: *splangchnizomai* followed by the Genitive (once; Mt.18:27), followed by *epi* plus Accusative (four times), followed by *epi* plus the Dative (twice) and followed by *peri* plus the Genitive (once; Mt. 9:36). In four instances, a recipient is (only) implied.

⁶¹⁴ σπλαγχνιζόμενος (Pres. Part.): Test. Zeb. 4.2, 6.4, 7.2 (plural); σπλαγχνισθεὶς (Past Part.): Test. Zeb. 7.1, 8.1b; σπλαγχνίζεται (Pres. tense) 8.3; ἐσπλαγχνίσθη (Past tense): Test. Zeb. 8.4. In Prov. 17:5 we find ἐπισπλαγχνιζόμενος, but it does not specify an object and is a *hapaxlegomenon*.

crowds. In this respect, the scope of compassion is considerably expanded: in the eyes of Jesus, not only an individual but also groups could be the considered with compassion. The universalist implication of Jesus' compassion for the crowds will presently be explored; even before including this dimension, the seemingly immense capacity for compassion that Jesus displayed must be noted. The second aspect that makes this category *sui generis* is closely linked to the previous observation: in Mark 8:2 and Matthew 15:32 (which is dependent on Mark's version), Jesus refers to Himself, saying "I experience pity for the crowds". He Himself attests to the compassion that He feels⁶¹⁵. Of the 12 instances in the Gospels, these are the only two using the verb in the First Person. Again, this usage of the verb in the First Person is antedated in the Testament of Zebulon⁶¹⁶.

It is almost superfluous to note that the five examples involving the feeding of a multitude are not accounts of five different events. In Matthew we find a reworking of the two accounts given by Mark. On closer reading of the various accounts, one also finds that the compassion for large groups of people that Jesus experiences is not always in the first instance with regard to their hunger. In the very first account that we encounter, of the feeding of five thousand people, Mark states that Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:34). The parallel account in Matthew relates that Jesus had compassion on the great throng, and healed their sick (Matthew 14:14), whereas the other related but abbreviated account (Matthew 9:36) gives the same reason than Mark for Jesus' compassion, namely that the multitude were like sheep without shepherd, prefacing and elaborating this observation with the words "they were troubled and in disarray"⁶¹⁷. It is only at evenfall that food and hunger become an issue (Matthew 14:15). Mark 8:2 and its parallel, Matthew 15:32 draw a direct connection between the hunger of the crowd of four thousand, not having eaten for three days, and the compassionate care of Jesus. To sum up: in these five accounts, we

⁶¹⁵ At this point, it is incumbent upon the present author to deal in short with a hermeneutical "red herring". Some theologians are of the opinion that the gospel accounts of the feeding of crowds are fictional, or "pious fiction" ("fromme Dichtung"). I do not accept this view, for the following reason: taking Rudolf Bultmann as a representative of this school of thought, one could agree that he was an excellent New Testamentician. However, he was not an accomplished literary critic. Bultmann *cum suis* seem unable to distinguish between literary genres, e.g. between myth and historical narrative, each of which exhibits clear literary markers displaying its specific type. Such scholars' inability to distinguish myth from historical narrative is susceptible of a ready explanation: the departing point of this school of thought is an *a priori* (and conscious or unconscious) philosophical premise that miracles cannot happen since this earthly reality is "closed" (without any transcendent dimension). For a compelling literary critique of this school of "demythologising", the reader is referred to an essay by C.S. Lewis, "Fernseed and Elephants", originally a talk given in 1959 to students at a theological college at Cambridge; *Fernseed and Elephants and Other Essays on Christianity*, Walter Hooper, ed. (Glasgow: Collins-Fount, 1978) 104-125.

⁶¹⁶ Test. Zeb. 4.2, 6.4, 7.1.

⁶¹⁷ The wording is slightly mystifying, as there is no obvious explanation at hand why the people would be "troubled/harassed/vexed". As it stands, the phrase does not "sit easily" within the immediate context. A possible explanation will presently be offered.

find that Jesus' compassionate response when observing the crowds is manifested in three different ways: feeding them (Mark 8:6-8; Matthew 15:32), healing them (Matthew 14:14) and teaching them (in other words, feeding their hunger for teaching; Mark 6:34)⁶¹⁸. In the two last-mentioned cases, this healing or teaching activity is subsequently consummated in the crowd's communal participation in a meal, thanks to the caring initiative taken by Jesus (Matthew 14:18-20, Mark 6:38-42)⁶¹⁹.

With these accounts of Jesus' compassionate interaction with the crowds, we are in the domain of the Old Testament conception of God's mercy and compassion. It was shown that the divine attributes of mercy, compassion and lovingkindness are attested by Israel as always having a practical outcome, as always effecting a turn in events to the good. This procedure was labelled "ergological", since the divine disposition is always transmuted into divine deeds or "works". It was also argued that this "divine deed dimension" was not only given expression through Israel's narrative recitals (which were always recitals giving witness about the practical salvation wrought by God), but was also encapsulated in a formulaic way in the mercy motto. In Jesus' attitude and actions with regard to the gatherings of people, we see an exhibition of this divine deed dimension. There are strong intertextual references between Jesus' feeding of the crowd, the salvation history of Israel, and the grace formula: the ambiguous use of ἔρημος or ἐρημία which could denote either a lonely place or the desert is suggestive of the feeding of Israel while wandering in the desert after their exodus⁶²⁰, and is recapitulated in the miraculous feeding of the large gathering of people by Jesus⁶²¹. The troubled Israelites wandering in the desert like lost sheep experienced how divine concern was transformed into divine involvement. This experience finds utterance in narratives about divine salvation, for example the recital of God's merciful interventions in the history of Israel which is recorded much later in Nehemiah 9:5b-31⁶²². This recital is of special interest for the present discussion with respect to intertextual allusions: verse 15 mentions how God gave the Israelites bread from heaven for their hunger. Verse 20 not only mentions the manna again, but also states that, while they were wandering, "You gave your good Spirit to teach/instruct them"⁶²³. In the

⁶¹⁸ We are struck by Mark's observation about the way in which the crowds experienced Jesus' teaching: they "gladly listened to Him" or "heard Him gladly" (ὁ πολὺς ὄχλος ἤκουεν αὐτοῦ ἡδέως, Mk. 12:27b). Elsewhere, we read how they "ran up to Him" upon seeing Him (Mk. 9:15b).

⁶¹⁹ In Matthew 9:36, which is more of a "generical" account of Jesus' activity, no practical response consequent upon Jesus' compassion is mentioned.

⁶²⁰ Mark 6:32 (εἰς ἔρημον τόπον) and 8:4 (ἐπ' ἐρημίας), Matthew 14:15 (ἔρημός ἐστιν ὁ τόπος) Matthew 15:33 (ἐν ἐρημίᾳ).

⁶²¹ Richard T. France sees a parallel between the miraculous feedings by Jesus and the miraculous feeding of 100 men with 20 loaves of barley bread and ears of ripe corn by Elisha (2 Kings 4:42-44); R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, Gordon D. Fee, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) p. 559.

⁶²² The cycle of Psalms 105-107 are but one other example of such narratives.

⁶²³ לְהַשְׁכִּילֵם נְתַתְּ הַטּוֹבָה וְרוּחְךָ. The LXX reads καὶ τὸ πνεῦμά σου τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἔδωκας συνετίσαι αὐτοὺς; instead of συνετίζειν, Mk. 6:34 uses διδάσκειν.

Gospel accounts referring to the heartfelt concern and compassion that Jesus had for the crowds, Jesus is depicted as teaching and/or feeding them, just as God did with his people according to the recital in Nehemiah 9⁶²⁴. In Nehemiah 9:27, the narrative recital relates that God gave disobedient Israel into the hands of their enemies, who “vexed”/“troubled”/“oppressed” them. It was mentioned earlier that in Matthew’s version of Mark’s original account (Mark 6:34-44), a phrase is added, namely “they were troubled/harassed and helpless/in disarray.” There is a possibility that the author had the verse in Nehemiah in mind when adding the phrase in Matthew 9:36, a possibility which in addition may help to explain the otherwise rather obscure reference to the crowd’s “being troubled/harassed” in Matthew’s version⁶²⁵. The entire phrase in Matthew 9:36 would in fact be an apt description of the conditions of the nation of Israel worded in Neh. 9:27: “troubled and in disarray”. There is a third strand of intertextuality to add: in the centre of this recital in Nehemiah is planted the mercy motto in its full format (verse 17)⁶²⁶, and in addition, at the conclusion of the entire narrative, the abbreviated form of the mercy motto (verse 31). It serves as the central statement and as the summation of God’s caring involvement in the life of Israel as related in the recital. Mercy, the Hebrew *ṣṣḥm* or *ṣṣḥmim*, is the continuous thread and central motif in this narrative, appearing 6 times including the full and the shorthand version of the mercy motto⁶²⁷. One could now start tying the intertextual threads together: in Israel’s narrative recitals of God’s interventions in their history, the notion of mercy plays a central part, either implicitly, or otherwise explicitly highlighted as in Nehemiah 9. When Mark and Matthew portray Jesus as teaching, healing or feeding large numbers of people, they describe this conduct of Jesus with the term “having compassion” and seem to present his conduct as a recapitulation or a demonstration of God’s merciful and compassionate dealings in the past with his people, which were worded in the longer format of narrative recitals of salvation, or in the the shorter format of the grace formula. In the accounts of miraculous feeding, Mark and Matthew do this by employing certain semantic “markers” (“desert”, “hunger”, “feeding”, “teaching”) which allude to salvific events in the Old Testament and which thus create an intertextual frame of reference. There is also a type of semantic interchange that takes place: God’s *rah^amim* is in the LXX often represented

⁶²⁴ By and large, this observation also applies to accounts in the Gospel of Luke of Jesus’ relations with the crowd, e.g. Luke 6:17 (with a parallel version in Matthew 4:23-25), that a “great crowd” of his disciples and a “great multitude” of people came to listen to Him and be healed by Him (an account which is followed by His teaching them in the Sermon on the Plain), or in his version of the miraculous feeding, that “He received/welcome[d] them [the crowds] and spoke to them about the Kingdom of God, and cured those having need of healing” (Luke 9:11). In the Gospel of John’s account of the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14), such detail is not included.

⁶²⁵ The term in Neh. 9:27 used in the LXX translation is *θλιβόντων*, from *θλίβειν*, with the related term *ἐσकुλμένοι*, from *σκούλλειν*, used in Matthew 9:36.

⁶²⁶ The recital starts in verse 5b or verse 6 (if verse 5b is seen as part of an invocation), and ends with verse 31.

⁶²⁷ Neh. 9:17, 19, 27, 28, 31a, 31b. In the LXX, the equivalent is *οἰκτιρμός* in various inflections.

by the term *oiktirmoi*, as in the account given in Nehemiah 9. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, the non-biblical term *splangchn-* in its various guises gradually replaced the LXX's *oiktir-*, and in its depth of meaning not only became the closest semantic equivalent to the Hebrew notion of \sqrt{rhm} , but eventually became in its verbal guises a term semantically so adequate that it could even replace both the epithets \sqrt{rhm} and \sqrt{hnn} of the mercy formula. When the authors Mark and Matthew refer to Jesus as having compassion with the crowd, and relate how He “acted out” his compassion in the form of practical interventions to the benefit of the crowd, healing, teaching and feeding them, the whole complex of associations with the God of the Old Testament is summoned, a God Who who actively demonstrates that He is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and full of constant lovingkindness⁶²⁸. In short: in the accounts of Mark and Matthew about Jesus’ behaviour towards the crowd, the verb *splangchnizomai* could be interpreted to represent the mercy motto which was used in Old Testament accounts to describe God’s conduct towards his people.

There is one other aspect regarding Jesus’ way with the crowds that needs to be explored, and that is the universalist dimension which is implicit in his conduct. This dimension does not simply become evident from the fact that the crowds with whom Jesus interacted in all probability would have been heterogeneous (with the composition varied, depending on the specific region or locus where He was ministering); his ministry itself is sometimes depicted as alternating between a particularist and universalist orientation. In a thought-provoking article, Judith Gundry-Volf reasons that in a portion of the gospel of Matthew (starting with Matthew 15:21-28), the ministry of Jesus is depicted as moving from an exclusivist purview to an inclusive one, and that the motive or driving force behind this reorientation was the concept of mercy, advocated by a gentile woman⁶²⁹. With perspectives largely drawn from this article, the following discussion will be presented.

A few clarifying remarks must first be made. The article could create the impression that Jesus only started directing his ministry to gentiles after his interaction with the gentile woman in question (called a “Canaanite” by Matthew, and a “Sirophoenician” by Mark), in other words, that according to Matthew, Jesus intentionally started out with a particularist mission, and only

⁶²⁸ An interesting question is whether Jesus, when referring to Himself as having compassion for the crowd (σπλαγχνίζομαι ἐπὶ τὸν ὄχλον) was assuming his divine role, or was simply emulating the principles of compassion voiced by Himself, e.g. in Luke 6:36 “Be merciful (*oiktirmones*) as your Father is merciful (*oiktirmōn*)”. Perhaps again the answer should simply be “Yes” – in the Person of Jesus, the one is not excluded by the other. Another question is what language He originally would have used. The probability that the *ochlos* would not have consisted only of Jewish-speaking people does not necessarily imply that He would have voiced his compassion in Greek, as his remark seems to have been directed to his disciples, and could therefore have been in Aramaic.

⁶²⁹ Judith Gundry-Volf, “Spirit, Mercy, and the Other”, *Theology Today*, vol. 51:4 (Ephrata: Science Press, 1995) 508-523.

later expanded this mission to become inclusive. Although there is some conflicting evidence, it is fairly clear that this is not the case in Matthew's gospel: from the very outset, Matthew gives accounts which place Jesus and his ministry of teaching and healing within the milieu of gentiles. In Matthew 4:25 it is related that large crowds followed him, from amongst other regions the Decapolis and the Transjordan. His Sermon on the Mount, especially the pericope in Matthew 5:43-48, has an undoubted universal and inclusive application⁶³⁰. He heals the servant of the Roman Centurion (8:5-13). He compares the Jewish towns of Chorazin and Bethsaida negatively with the heathen cities of Tyre and Sidon, and even with the notorious city of Sodom (11:20-24). Although it may be possible to equate the course of Jesus' ministry with a diachronic process gradually becoming less exclusive and centripetal, this equation cannot be sustained without any doubt. Gundry-Volf's article should be interpreted as making a hermeneutical and synchronic incision in a portion of Matthew to show how a perspective is developed from particularism/exclusivism to universalism/inclusion, by her comparing the pericope to be discussed (Matthew 15:21-28) with subsequent events recorded by Matthew⁶³¹.

If one collates this pericope with the parallel account in Mark 7:24-30, the following events unfold: Jesus retires to a house in the region of Tyre and Sidon (north of Galilaea, today part of Syria) and wants nobody to know that He is there. We encounter a Jesus who is in all probability physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted because of all the demands made on Him. Nevertheless, a Canaanite woman apparently enters the house and makes demands on Him. She is clearly thick-skinned and importunate, not respecting his wish and not sensitive to his desire to be left alone to rest. According to Matthew's account, when Jesus ignores her⁶³², she keeps on shouting *Eleêson me*, "Have mercy on me", so incessantly that out of frustration and irritation the disciples eventually disturb Jesus and ask Him to send her away, as she is constantly "crying/shouting" "against" them⁶³³. To his first "no/not" (οὐκ), Jesus adds a second "not": "I have not been sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"⁶³⁴ and then

⁶³⁰ It is not always clear whom Jesus addresses when He delivers his Sermon on the Mount. The very first verse initiating the account, 5:1, is already ambiguous: did Jesus leave the crowd behind when He went up the mountain, and only addressed his disciples, or not? In chapter 6:7, during his teaching about prayer, He says "Do not heap up inane phrases like the Gentiles do", a remark which one imagines would not be made in the presence of gentiles. Another verse which would support a particularist view is when Jesus commissions the Twelve with the words: "Do not make a detour to the gentiles and do not enter any Samaritan town; rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6).

⁶³¹ Although not elaborating on her remark, Suzanne Nicholson states that Matthew 15:22 "points to the universal nature of the Gospel"; article "Mercy", *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd ed., Green, Brown & Perrin, eds. (Downer's Grove: IVP, 2013) 586.

⁶³² οὐκ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῇ λόγον, "He did not answer her a single word."

⁶³³ κράζει ὀπισθεν ἡμῶν.

⁶³⁴ οὐκ ἀπεστάλην εἰ μὴ εἰς τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου Ἰσραὴλ.

a third: “It is not fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the puppies”⁶³⁵. Despite this triple dismissal by Jesus, the woman is unabashed, and gives a quick-witted reply. In most translations, not only English, her reply is translated along the lines of “Yes, Lord, yet/but even the dogs eat the morsels falling from the table”, with “but” or “yet” introducing an adverbial clause of concession. The present author should like to submit a translation which not only seems truer to the Greek but may also be a better reflection of the the woman’s feisty and indomitable spirit. As mentioned, most versions translate the woman’s answer into a concessional clause, but she is in fact conceding nothing. Her answer rather contains an adverbial clause of reason. In the Greek, there is a clear γὰρ (“for/because”; ναί κύριε καὶ γὰρ τὰ κυνάρια ἐσθίει ἀπὸ τῶν ψιχίων τῶν πιπτόντων ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης τῶν κυρίων αὐτῶν) which in most translations is not given its due. My submission is the following: when Jesus tells her “It is not fair...”, in a flash she replies “Yes sir, it is! Because the puppies eat the morsels falling from the table”⁶³⁶. She is like the widow in Jesus’ parable who has no doubt that she has a fair and strong case (Luke 18:1-8), and because of this conviction keeps bothering the judge⁶³⁷ and wearying him out⁶³⁸ by her continual coming⁶³⁹. Her answer is a challenge to Jesus’ dismissive words and prompts Him to give her one of the highest accolades about which we read in the Gospels⁶⁴⁰, and to accede to her request.

It is at this point that some of Gundry-Volf’s insights could be co-opted. She observes that, in contrast to his encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (John 4:1-26), where Jesus is open, accepting and not operating with stereotypes, it seems as if in the case of the Canaanite woman, the “barriers – ethnic, gender, socio-economic, and political – between her

⁶³⁵ οὐκ ἔστιν καλὸν λαβεῖν τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων καὶ βαλεῖν τοῖς κυναρίοις. *Kunarion* is a diminutive, therefore my translation of “puppies.” On the other hand, R.T. France is of the opinion that the diminutive would be *kunidion*, and that *kunarion* simply means a domestic dog; Richard Thomas France, *L’Évangile de Matthieu*, Tome 2, Commentaire Évangélique de la Bible (CEB) 21 (Vaux-sur-Seine: Édific, 2000) 55.

⁶³⁶ One commentator of the same opinion was found. In his commentary on Matthew, R.T. France says that the woman’s reply to Jesus is not a “meek acceptance of Jesus’ hard words, but rather an objection” (“...n’est pas un accueil docile des paroles dures de Jésus, mais plutôt une objection”; the French equivalent of the Greek γὰρ would be “car”, whereas “pourtant” would be used to introduce a concessional clause). France, *“Matthieu”*, 54.

⁶³⁷ παρέχειν μοι κόπον, “gives me trouble”; *kopos* could also imply a beating of the breast.

⁶³⁸ ὑπωπιάζει με “wears me out”/“exhausts me”.

⁶³⁹ ἐρχομένη (Present Participle; “continuously coming”). One is tempted to wonder whether Jesus did not perhaps base this parable on the real event of his dealings with the insistent Canaanite woman, who was in all likelihood also a widow (which would explain why she made a case with Jesus and not her husband).

⁶⁴⁰ Mt. 15:28 ὦ γύναι μεγάλη σου ἡ πίστις “O woman, great is your faith!” In Mt. 8:10, also when dealing with a gentile (the Centurion), Jesus says ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν παρ’ οὐδενὶ τοσαύτην πίστιν ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ εὑρόν “Truly, I tell you that nowhere in Israel have I found such faith.”

and Jesus will in fact prevail..."⁶⁴¹. After all, despite her repeated pleas for mercy⁶⁴², Jesus turns her down. But the woman resists this exclusion. "She meets his stony silence with more pleading. She drowns out the disciples' request for Jesus to send her away with her own repeated requests for Jesus to have mercy"⁶⁴³. One could almost say that she is a formidable opponent in debate, because she quickly turns argument into counter-argument: she "cleverly turns his own maxim supporting exclusivism into an illustration of inclusivism in salvation", by taking Jesus' reference to the dogs under the table and smartly applying it to the gentiles' advantage⁶⁴⁴. Some observations by Gundry-Volf may be debatable, for example that Jesus may have equated gentiles and dogs⁶⁴⁵ and that the woman worshipped Him as Lord by kneeling before Him and addressing Him as *kurios*⁶⁴⁶. However, this hardly detracts from her many other insights, for example that, in her answer, the gentile woman implies that the children and the puppies/dogs eat together and simultaneously, and that she thus denies "both exclusivism and sequential priority in salvation based on ethnic identity"⁶⁴⁷. We are gradually coming closer to the point: Gundry-Volf rhetorically asks "What was the source of the Syrophoenician woman's hope that Jesus would deliver her daughter, despite all the obstacles? What motivated her to persist in hope at every turn, to apply her ingenuity, her life experience, even her powerlessness as a woman by falling down at his feet and pleading for mercy, in pursuit of the miracle?"⁶⁴⁸ The answer is her belief in Jesus' mercy, and the belief that his mercy would and could not be exclusive or particularist, but would be "unbounded" and without "bias"⁶⁴⁹. When answering that the children and the puppies in fact eat together, she conjures up the picture of a household, which was a woman's domain in those times. And

⁶⁴¹ Gundry-Volf, "Spirit, Mercy..." 515.

⁶⁴² ἐλέησόν με κύριε υἱὸς Δαυὶδ, Mt. 15:22; κύριε βοήθει μοι, Mt. 15:25. She must have shouted for mercy and help many more times than only twice: this follows from the disciples' report that she was harassing/pestering them with her constant shouting, and also from the literary fact that in reportage, one would not record every single instance of shouting, but give an abbreviated account, just as is the case in this account.

⁶⁴³ Gundry-Volf, art.cit. 518.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid. As only Luther can, he writes "Ist das nicht ein Meisterstück? Sie fängt Christus in seinen eigenen Worten", M. Luther, *Evangelische Auslegungen 2. Das Matthäusevangelium (Kap. 5-23)*, 4. Ausgabe, Erwin Mühlhaupt, ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973) 510. One is also reminded of Jesus' *logion* in Mt 7:9-10/Lk 11:11-12 about a father who would not deny his son's request for bread or fish.

⁶⁴⁵ Gundry-Volf, art.cit. 517, 518.

⁶⁴⁶ The same words and acts of obeisance would be performed before an important person or potentate, for example. Peter Fiedler, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, ThKNT 1, E.W. Stegemann et. al., eds. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006) 281 is of the opinion that she may have been a "God-fearer" ("Gottesfürchtige"), that is, a *metuens* or proselyte.

⁶⁴⁷ Art.cit. 518.

⁶⁴⁸ Gundry-Volf, "Spirit, Mercy..." 519.

⁶⁴⁹ Luther again: "[Sie]...traut dennoch fest, dass Christi Güte drunter verborgen sei, und will nicht denken, dass Christus ungnädig sei oder sein könne", Luther, *Matthäusevangelium* 509.

“[m]ercy is a principle by which a woman runs her household. If she operates this way every day, would not also the Lord...?”⁶⁵⁰

Gundry-Volf finally points out how this notion of mercy that knows no boundaries is developed in the subsequent passages in Matthew: in the next pericope (15:29-31), Jesus is found ministering next to the Sea of Galilee, where He performs many miracles of healing. That gentiles were among the crowds (*ochloi*, verse 30, *ochlos*, verse 31) is clear from Matthew’s report in verse 31 that “they glorified the God of Israel” – an expression that would have been worded simply “they glorified God” if only Jews (or for that matter gentile *metuentes*) were present. In the following pericope (15: 32-39), we find a further exposition of the kind of mercy that the Canaanite woman expected from Jesus when He declares his compassion for the crowd. Gundry-Volf describes this shift from exclusion to inclusion, from particularism to universalism very felicitously: “Whereas ‘he did not answer her [the Canaanite woman] a word,’ he now expresses words of compassion for the Gentiles. Whereas the disciples wanted to ‘send’ the woman away, Jesus does not want to ‘send’ the crowds away hungry”⁶⁵¹. She continues by pointing out further intertextual contrasts: first, Jesus states that it is not fitting to give bread to dogs; now He feeds 4000 people, of whom many were gentiles. First Jesus insists that the children must “first be satisfied” (*prôton chortasthênai*; Mark 7:27); now we read that the crowd was thoroughly satisfied or “sated” (*efagon pantes kai echortasthêsan*; Matthew 15:37). First Jesus implies that there may not be enough bread if some of it is given to the dogs, now there is so much bread that the disciples pick up seven baskets of leftovers⁶⁵². The universalist and eschatological element of Jesus’ feeding of crowds is also mentioned in passing by R.T France, who shares Gundry-Volf’s evaluation of the Canaanite woman’s *modus operandi*: “In refusing to accept the traditional exclusion of Gentiles from the grace of God, she has shown a prophetic grasp of the new perspective of the kingdom of heaven, which is now to be open to ‘people from east and west (8:11-12)...’”⁶⁵³. The quoted verses refer to the eschatological banquet at the end of days about which Jesus says the following: “I tell you that many will come from the East and the West and sit at the table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven...” (Matthew 8:11). Additionally significant is the fact that the setting and occasion for this prophecy of Jesus about the eschatological feast is his dealings with another gentile, the Centurion who was pleading for his servant in severe distress.

⁶⁵⁰ Gundry-Volf, “Spirit, Mercy” 519.

⁶⁵¹ Art.cit. 521. His “words of compassion” are *splangchnizomai epi ton ochlon*. “Send her away”: *apoluson autên*; “He does not want to send the crowd away hungry”: *apolusai autous nêsteis ou thelô*.

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ France, *Matthew* 590.

The matrix within which this conceptual theme of moving from exclusivism to inclusivism, from observing boundaries to dismantling boundaries is developed, is the concept of unreserved and universal mercy, made visible in Jesus' compassionate conduct towards the crowds. The inception of the theme of universalism (and eschatology) happened during the exilic and/or post-exilic stage of Israel's existence. The latter part of Isaiah is a shining example of the development of the notion of universalism, but even more relevant for the present discussion is the Books of Jonah and Joel and Psalm 145. In the Book of Jonah, the view of the *prophet* Jonah is set in stark contrast to the view of the *author* of Jonah. The first clings to an inward-looking, exclusivist view, that God is solely the God of Israel and that He therefore has no concern, or should have no concern, for other nations⁶⁵⁴. The aim of the author of Jonah is to point out in a partly satirical way that Israel should broaden their view of salvation⁶⁵⁵. The climax of the story is Jonah's reproachful recital of the mercy motto "against" God (Jonah 4:2). It is the mercy motto which is used by the author(s) as object lesson or as the "moral of the story", namely that God's mercy is boundless. The ambit of the mercy motto is extended to include all mankind. In the Book of Joel, with its universalist and eschatological motifs, the mercy motto is also cited (Joel 2:13); it becomes one of the unifying themes of his prophecies. We have also seen that eschatological and other passages in the Testaments of the XII Patriarchs have a universalist dimension: Zebulon exhorts his sons to have compassion on all persons⁶⁵⁶, and he prophecies that in the last days, God will gather all the nations to serve Him zealously⁶⁵⁷. Simeon prophecies that God will save all the nations together with Israel⁶⁵⁸, and Levi prophecies that at the end of days, God will visit all the nations in compassion⁶⁵⁹. Another document that could be mentioned in this regard is the apocryphal work Baruch, in which we find similar themes than in Nehemiah (recitals of God's salvation) and Joel (eschatology and universalism).

The developing universalist view that God is the God of all nations was continued by Jesus. This is clear from the outset of his ministry: in both Matthew's Sermon on the Mount and Luke's Sermon on the Plain, He points out that evil and unjust people also receive earthly blessings

⁶⁵⁴ A striking example of the limited scope of the prophet Jonah's belief is given at the outset of the story (Jonah 1:1-3): when he receives the commission from God to address the inhabitants of Nineveh, he decides to flee to Tarsis, which does not really make sense; he could have been disobedient by simply staying where he was. Why does he flee? Because of his belief that God was a "local" god, confined to the territory of Israel, so that by fleeing, he would go "beyond the pale" of God's dominion and therefore be *incommunicado*.

⁶⁵⁵ The use of abstract nouns like "universalism" or "inclusivism" and "salvation" may sometimes have an obscuring effect: one should remind oneself continually that these abstract terms are used with reference to the universality and inclusivity of God's *mercy and compassion*.

⁶⁵⁶ Test. Zeb. 8:1 ἔχετε εὐσπλαγχνίαν κατὰ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐν ἐλέει.

⁶⁵⁷ Test. Zeb. 9:8 καὶ ἐπιστρέψει πάντα τὰ ἔθνη εἰς παραζήλωσιν αὐτοῦ.

⁶⁵⁸ Test. Sim. 7:2 σώσει πάντα τὰ ἔθνη καὶ τὸ γένος τοῦ Ἰσραήλ.

⁶⁵⁹ Test. Levi 4:4 ἐπισκέψεται κύριος πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σπλάγχνοις.

from God (sun and rain - the essential prerequisites for life are light and water)⁶⁶⁰. The fact that God is kind (χρηστός, Luke 6:35) even to bad people becomes the basis for Jesus' call to love even one's enemies⁶⁶¹: his followers should be merciful, just as the Father in Heaven is merciful (οἰκτίρων, Luke 6:36). It is possible that, by using the terms *chrēstos* and *oiktirmones/oiktirmōn*, Jesus was quoting from Psalm 145, a post-exilic acrostic psalm which not only has the mercy formula placed in its centre (verse 8), but also contains the following words in the next verse: "The Lord is good (טוב, χρηστός) to all, and his mercies (יְרֵמִיו, οἰκτιρμοί) are over all that He has made."⁶⁶²

We now come to the point: it is not only in the Testament XII where the concept of *splangchn-* is sometimes used in connection with God's all-inclusive plan for the nations in the end-time, as is evident from the quotations given here. During Israel's post-exilic phase, we see that the grace formula is employed in the later parts of the Old Testament almost as a type of "oratoric device" to persuade Israel to adopt a universalist view of God's mercy. It occupies a more or less central place in three such Old Testament settings where the universality of God's mercy is asserted (Joel, Jonah, Psalm 145). It is possible to view *splangchnizomai* as the New Testament counterpart to the Old Testament mercy motto when Mark and Matthew make use of this term when giving accounts of Jesus' dealings with the crowds⁶⁶³. When they picture Jesus as having compassion with the crowd, and healing, teaching or feeding them without His making distinctions between their ethnic, moral or religious orientation, he becomes the Protagonist of a universalist view of God's mercy. In his demeanour and disposition towards the crowds, He becomes the incarnation of God's compassion towards all people, as verbally formulated in the mercy motto and expounded in post-exilic Jewish religious thought. In Joel 2:13 the mercy motto in its full format is quoted. Only 5 verses after the quotation of the mercy motto, in Joel 2:18b, we read the words "And the Lord had pity/compassion on his people"⁶⁶⁴. Likewise, Jesus had compassion on the crowds. And in Joel 2:26a we read: "And you shall

⁶⁶⁰ This *logion* of Jesus is later paraphrased by Paul and Barnabas when they address the Lycaonians and Zeus-worshippers in Lystra: "...for He did good things and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and happiness" (Acts 14:17).

⁶⁶¹ M. Reiser calls this commandment of Jesus "outrageous"; Marius Reiser, "Love of Enemies in the Context of Antiquity", NTS 47 (2001), 424.

⁶⁶² J. Nolland correlates the similar expression in Mt. 5:45 ("He makes his sun come up over bad and good people, and lets it rain on the just and the unjust") with Ps. 145:9, John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 268. In the patristic literature, Matthew's χρηστός and Luke's οἰκτίρων are sometimes combined: "Become kind and merciful as your Father is kind and merciful, letting his sun rise over sinners and the just and the wicked" (Justin Apologia I: 1.15.13); "For we see that the Almighty God is kind and merciful, causing His sun to rise on the unthankful and on the righteous, and sending rain on the holy and on the wicked" (Justin Dialogue with Trypho 96:3).

⁶⁶³ The Test. XII's occasional usage of *splangchn-* in connection with universalist and eschatological prophecies (as mentioned earlier) is another antecedent to NT usage.

⁶⁶⁴ יְרַחֵם אֱלֹהֵינוּ (from *vhlml* "pity, sympathy"); LXX καὶ ἐφείσατο τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ.

eat in plenty and be satisfied”⁶⁶⁵. In Jesus’ care and concern for the people, striving to satisfy their corporal needs and their spiritual hunger, this eschatological promise was consummated.

6.2.2 *Compassion in three parables of Jesus*

In the previous section, we encountered two instances of the verb *splangchnizomai* worded by Jesus Himself⁶⁶⁶. In three parables, we also find verbal forms of *splangchnizomai* from the mouth of Jesus. These three parables are the following: the Parable of the “Good Samaritan” (Luke 10:25-37), the Parable of the “Lost/Prodigal Son” (Luke 15:11-32) and the Parable of the “Unforgiving Servant” (Matthew 18:21-35)⁶⁶⁷. The first two parables will be discussed together, as they have several aspects in common. The third parable will be discussed separately: it is unique in more than one aspect, the most important of which is its function in establishing the mercy motto in the teachings of Jesus.

6.2.2.1 *The Parables of the “Good Samaritan” and the “Prodigal Son”*

Some introductory remarks could be made regarding these two parables. Both form part of the Lukan *Sondergut*, special/unique textual material that is found only in Luke, and therefore derives from a separate, independent prior source, either first-hand eyewitness accounts (verbal or written), or second-hand verbal or written reports⁶⁶⁸. Both parables were told by Jesus in response to questioning: the first parable after a lawyer (*nomikos*) asked Him what he had to do to inherit eternal life, with the follow-up question who his “neighbour” was. The second parable (together with the two preceding shorter parables) was told by Jesus after the Pharisees and scribes questioned his behaviour of consorting with tax collectors and sinners. The two parables also complement each other: *splangchnizomai* is the central motif in both parables, but in the first parable it is the model or ideal set for human behaviour, whereas in the second parable it is set as example of God’s behaviour. A *caveat* should also be raised: the discussion of the two parables should not digress to matters that do not pertain to the central motif, namely the notion of compassion, and care should also be taken not to let the discussion become a type of homiletic discourse, as the present exploration is not a homiletical study.

The starting point for the exploration of the two parables will be some valuable insights offered by Michel Gourgues⁶⁶⁹. He firstly accords the concept of compassion/pity a crucial position in

⁶⁶⁵ מְאָכְלִים וְשָׂבִיִּים; LXX καὶ φάγεσθε ἐσθίοντες καὶ ἐμπλησθήσεσθε.

⁶⁶⁶ Mk. 8:2, Mt. 15:32.

⁶⁶⁷ The titles of all three parables will be reconsidered in the discussion to follow.

⁶⁶⁸ Together with the short parables about the lost sheep (Lk. 15:4-7) and the lost silver coin (“drachma”, Lk. 15:8-10) preceding that of the lost son, they are the parables which are unique to the gospel of Luke.

⁶⁶⁹ Michel Gourgues, “La miséricorde en trois temps. Le témoignage de Luc”, *Science et Esprit*, vol. 70:2 (Ottawa/Montréal: CUD, 2018) 139-152.

Luke's gospel by calling Luke "the evangelist of compassion"⁶⁷⁰. He compares three accounts in Luke in which *splangchnizomai* appears: the two parables under discussion, together with the report of the raising of the widow's only son outside Nain (Luke 7:11-17). He identifies a succession of three steps or stages in which mercy/compassion is "deployed": first seeing the suffering person, then having pity, and finally approaching the person⁶⁷¹. In the three passages, the Greek key words in succession are ἰδὼν ("seeing"; Luke 7:13, 10:33 and 15:20), ἐσπλαγγνίσθη ("had compassion"; Luke 7:13, 10:33 and 15:20) and προσελθὼν/δραμὼν ("going to"; Luke 7:14 and 10:34/"running to" Luke 15:20).

To the three steps of Gourgues' should be added a fourth and very important step, namely that of touching, an element which is evident in all three cases. The account of the raising of the widow's son in Luke 7 will be treated later; in the case of the two parables, this fourth step is indicated or implied by the terms "bandaged his wounds" as well as "placed him on his own animal" (Luke 10:34)⁶⁷², actions which involve touching the other, and "embraced him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20)⁶⁷³. This fourth step is implicitly acknowledged by Gourgues when he describes the stepwise unfolding of compassion in other successive terms, namely "caring observation, or putting the eye on somebody", "caring feeling, or putting one's heart out", and "caring intervention, or the 'putting on' of the hands"⁶⁷⁴. One may conclude that the "feeling" of compassion finally and literally "manifests" itself in physical touching, which is a gesture with profound psychological effects, symbolising involvement and acceptance. Cory Labrecque is one of the few authors who devote some comment to the significance of touch, "which is a *concrete* [italics in original] way, according to Jesus, to declare acceptance and to affirm one's personhood..."⁶⁷⁵.

The process which was outlined above may now be applied more comprehensively to the two parables, starting with Luke 10:25-37, which comes from the "oldest stratum of the Synoptic

⁶⁷⁰ "L'évangéliste de la miséricorde", art.cit. 139.

⁶⁷¹ What is slightly perplexing, is his statement that "in the reports of these differing genres...the vocabulary of mercy itself is not employed, but in them one discovers the same deployment in three instances which constitute the performing of mercy" ("Dans ces récits de genres littéraires différents...le vocabulaire de la miséricorde lui-même n'est pas utilisé mais on y retrouve le même déploiement en trois moments que comporte son exercice"; art.cit. 139). The only possible explanation is that he does not view *splangchnizomai* as a term for compassion, but only for a deep-seated emotion, a surmise which is reinforced when he typifies *esplangchnisthê* as "an interior burning/warm feeling" ("un ébranlement intérieur") and "an intimate feeling/sentiment" ("[un] sentiment intime"), art.cit. 144. He does not seem to accord the NT usage of the term, especially in its verbal forms, its proper due. His insights still remain valid and valuable, however.

⁶⁷² κατέδησεν τὰ τραύματα αὐτοῦ...ἐπιβιάσας δὲ αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὸ ἴδιον κτῆνος.

⁶⁷³ πέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ καὶ κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν.

⁶⁷⁴ "L'attention, ou la mise des yeux", "l'émotion, ou la mise du coeur" and "l'intervention, ou la mise des mains"; art.cit. 142.

⁶⁷⁵ Cory Andrew Labrecque, "Catholic Ethics and the Incarnation of Mercy. A Study in Hospitality", Theoforum, vol. 47:2 (Ottawa: Peeters, 2016-2017), 264.

tradition”⁶⁷⁶. There is a qualitative difference between the way that the priest and the Levite “were seeing” the victim and the way that the Samaritan “was seeing” the victim, although the same verb (present participle *idôn*) is used⁶⁷⁷. The two religious figures “pass by on the other side”: the verb reads ἀντιπαρήλθεν (*antiparélthen*); παρήλθεν would have been sufficient to convey the meaning, but Luke (or Jesus) adds the prefix *anti-* to indicate that their action is to the detriment of the victim⁶⁷⁸. We are again approaching the dynamics of mercy and compassion as expounded in the Old Testament: God’s compassion is never less than a deep-seated feeling or emotion, but at the same time, it is always much more – it is always manifested in his becoming involved in the sorrow and suffering of the collective or the individual, and demonstrating this involvement by bringing about a change in the situation. The Samaritan did not only “see” the half-dead victim; he “put his eyes on the man”⁶⁷⁹. He “internalised” his seeing, and this moved him to compassion, which impelled him to come close to the man in order to care for him. His involvement could be described graphically: it is probable that, when treating the man and binding his wounds, he got some of the man’s blood on himself and his clothes. In the Old Testament, we read that it is in blood that a life’s being is⁶⁸⁰. To be so closely involved with somebody else that one ends up with their blood on you is a very graphic and powerful symbol of an involvement that is so profound that two lives commingle. It is an involvement which renounces any boundaries separating two people, whether it is race, religion, culture, gender, or simply an aversion to physical closeness⁶⁸¹. In the actions of the Samaritan, we see somebody who reached out beyond the boundaries which defined, and could have limited, his existence. It was compassion which impelled him

⁶⁷⁶ Köster, “Σπλάγχχνον” 554.

⁶⁷⁷ Luise Schrottruff makes a cutting comment about their way of seeing: “Sie sahen und sahen weg”, “They saw and looked away”; *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (Gütersloh: Gütersloh Verlaghaus, 2005) 173.

⁶⁷⁸ “*Anti-* betont, daß er [the priest] dieses zum Schaden des Notleidenden tut...”, Hans Klein, *Das Lukasevangelium*, KEK Bd. I/3, D.-A. Koch, ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006) 392, fn. 392.

Two things could briefly be mentioned: firstly, J. Kremer supposes that the priest and Levite were on their way back from doing temple service in Jerusalem; Jacob Kremer, *Lukasevangelium*, Neue Echter Bibel (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1988) 121. The opposite is more likely, namely that they were on their way to a temple service. This would secondly also partly explain their unwillingness to become involved: touching a corpse would make them unclean (cf. Numbers 19:11-13) and unfit for temple service. We read that the man was left “half-dead” (ἡμιθανῆ), and he may have appeared dead from a distance. Nevertheless, either way their actions appear stark and pitiless. “For ostensibly religious motives, they neglect the greatest precept of the law- to protect and care for life. Their rigid interpretation has reduced the law of the covenant to a preoccupation with their own purity...”, Catherine E. Clifford, “Mercy: Essence and Mission of the Church”, *Theoforum*, vol.47:2 (Ottawa: Peeters, 2016-2017) 217.

⁶⁷⁹ Afrikaans has a very felicitous verb to allow for the difference between merely “seeing” and really “observing” (German “sehen” and “beobachten”, French “voir” and “regarder”), namely “raaksien”, denoting a seeing that “touches” (“raak”) the other person, that really takes note of the other or “takes in” the other.

⁶⁸⁰ Gen. 9:4-5, Lev. 17:11,14.

⁶⁸¹ The notion that true compassion for another entails a collapse of personal boundaries is developed by Oliver Davies in his work *A Theology of Compassion: Metaphysics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

to transcend any prejudice or preconceptions. “It [mercy] is the only power on earth that can contest the untransformed ego and its narrow existence”⁶⁸².

There is another striking aspect about the Samaritan’s actions which is pointed out by Brad H. Young, namely that the Samaritan’s actions are a reversal of the robbers’ actions⁶⁸³. The robbers threw him from his animal, did him grievous bodily harm, and left him behind for dead. The Samaritan goes to him, nurses his wounds, and loads him onto his beast⁶⁸⁴. One could say that by his actions he makes the deeds of the robbers undone. It is therefore the more perplexing that Young has nothing to say about the meaning and import of *splangchnizomai*. Surely, we are again in the domain of the Old Testament and its witness of God’s compassion, mercy and lovingkindness, a process which often involves a reversal of the misfortunes of believers individually or collectively. The outcome of Job’s story and life was earlier briefly discussed. God did not only reverse his misfortune but made it doubly good⁶⁸⁵. The Greeks had a saying which seems irrefutable: “Even the gods cannot change the past.” Time and again in Old Testament accounts, this saying is refuted by the involvement and intervention of God. Another “exemplar” who was briefly discussed in a previous section was Joseph. In his life story, we have irrefutable verification that the God of Israel is even able to change the past: He can bring about a turnaround or reversal of events which causes the past to assume a totally different guise in retrospect. Joseph himself attests to the fact that God had changed or transformed his past: in Genesis 45, when he reveals himself to his brothers, he refers to past events: “You sold me to be taken away to Egypt” (Genesis 45:5)⁶⁸⁶. In the very next verse, he makes the astonishing declaration that this past event has been changed: “It is God who sent me ahead of you in order to save lives.” He confirms this extraordinary declaration by contrasting his “past past” and his “present past” in a single sentence: “So really it was not you who sent me here, but God” (verse 8). One could approach the matter under discussion from another angle: if Joseph or his brothers or father, or any person or scholar, contemplated Joseph’s life and the *telos* that the Lord had with him, and tried to describe a God who could work such wonders, what would be the epithets chosen? The epithets chosen by Jewish

⁶⁸² Mark Slatter, “Pope Francis’s Poor: God’s Pedagogy for Mercy”, *Theoforum*, vol.47:2 (Ottawa: Peeters, 2016-2017), 273.

⁶⁸³ Bradford Humes Young, *The Parables. Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998) 107.

⁶⁸⁴ Klein, “*Lukasevangelium*” 389, fn. 12, refers to J. Kiilunen who pointed out the interesting parallel between this parable and 2 Chr. 28:15, where it is related how the Israelite soldiers who had captured many Judaeans prisoners, mainly women and children, eventually clothed them, fed them, poured oil on their wounds and put the weakest on donkeys for the journey to Jericho; Jarmo Kiilunen, “Das Doppelgebot der Liebe in synoptischer Sicht. Ein redaktionskritischer Versuch”, *AASF*, Bd. 250 (Helsinki, 1989) 76.

⁶⁸⁵ “And the Lord Job turned/restored Job’s fortunes...and the Lord gave him twice as much as he formerly had” (Job 42:10).

⁶⁸⁶ Cf. also earlier his words in prison to the cupbearer: “I was stolen from the land of the Hebrews...” (Gen. 40:15).

believers were poured into a formula: “Merciful and compassionate is the Lord, slow to anger and full of steadfast love.” What more appropriate epithets could be chosen? There could be little doubt that by telling this parable, Jesus is illustrating what *splangchnizomai* entails: to notice the person in distress, to “take” that distress “to heart”, and finally to translate thought and feeling into action by becoming involved and making an effort to undo or ameliorate the person’s distress. Very aptly, Luise Schrottroff remarks that the Samaritan’s compassionate doings are an “imitatio Dei”⁶⁸⁷ –they are a small and incidental enactment of God’s constant compassion. It would surely not be stretching the matter to state that Jesus’ illustration of *splangchnizomai* is nothing more or less than what was illustrated by the Old Testament mercy motto. *Splangchnizomai* becomes the New Testament counterpart or representative of the grace motto, if only because this verb became a term richer in significance than *e/leos* or *oiktirmos*, and because it became the term best suited to represent the Old Testament notions of mercy, compassion and lovingkindness as we find it compressed in the grace motto, notions which always imply a “divine deed dimension” or ergological register. It is therefore fitting that in the Afrikaans Bible, for example, the parable is called “The Parable of the Merciful Samaritan” (“Die Gelykenis van die Barmhartige Samaritaan”), which is a more apt description than “The ‘good’ Samaritan”: it is owing to the practical deeds performed by the proverbial Samaritan to the benefit of the victim that the conclusion could be made by listeners that he was merciful/compassionate, just as it was through experiencing salvific events in their lives that Israel could come to the conclusion that their God was compassionate, patient, merciful and ever-loving.

In this regard, there is another key word that features in this parable and further reinforces the “deed dimension” of compassion: *poiein* (“do”), used four times. The background of the parable is the lawyer’s question to Jesus “What should I *do*...?” (Luke 10:25). In verse 28, Jesus says that if he “does” this (love God and his neighbour with his whole being), he will live. After finishing his parable, Jesus asks the lawyer who he thinks proved to be the robbed man’s neighbour (verse 36), to which the lawyer replies “The one showing [literally “*doing*”] him compassion/mercy” (verse 37a Ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔλεος μετ’ αὐτοῦ). Jesus then concludes “Go then and *do* likewise” (verse 37b)⁶⁸⁸. We are still fully within the domain of the Old Testament conception of God’s mercy and compassion with the usage of *e/leos*, one of the epithets of the grace formula. The Hebrew mother word for *e/leos* is often *ṣḥm* in various

⁶⁸⁷ Luise Schrottroff, *Gleichnisse* 176.

⁶⁸⁸ Another instance is found in Mark’s account of the demoniac who was healed by Jesus: Jesus tells him “Go home to your people and tell them how much the Lord *has done* for you, and that He *had mercy/compassion* on you” (Mk. 5:19). “And he went out and proclaimed how much Jesus *had done* for him” (verse 20).

inflections, especially *rāham* and *rah^amīm*⁶⁸⁹. As is the case with the Hebrew *hesed*, *eleos* in the LXX and New Testament is “not primarily a disposition but a helpful act...”⁶⁹⁰. The same is applicable when *eleos* is used as equivalent to the Old Testament *rāham* and *rah^amīm*: Hebrew and Greek “denote the act or expression of love rather than the emotion”⁶⁹¹. In this parable, *splangchizomai* becomes the substantiation and authentication of *eleos poiein*, “doing mercy” or “performing acts of compassion.”⁶⁹²

Following this train of thought, there is a last perspective to be added. In the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, we find for the first time a novel and original usage, namely applying the epithets *eusplangchnos* and *eleēmōn* (εὐσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων), the first two epithets of the grace formula, which were exclusively used with reference to God⁶⁹³, to a good human being⁶⁹⁴. It was also pointed out that the Testament XII showed other usages which were original, especially the use of declensions or conjugations of *splangchn-* with or without related concepts such as *eleos*. These inflections of *splangchn-*, either in combination with another auxiliary term, or alone-standing, are in the XII equitably used with reference to God or with reference to human behaviour. In the teachings of Jesus, the application of divine attributes or epithets to human behaviour is continued, just as He engaged and carried on with the usage and meaning of *splangchnizomai* as found in the Test. XII⁶⁹⁵. Again, as is the case with the

⁶⁸⁹ As discussed in chapter 3 (subsection 3.1.6 “Terminological accuracy”), there exists a fairly large degree of interchangeability and “inconsistency” of translation between the Hebrew terms *vrhm*, *vhnn* and *vhsd* and the Greek terms *eleos* and *oiktirmoi* and their inflections, an issue also pointed out by R. Bultmann: “In the language of later Judaism *hesed* and *rāh^amīm* can hardly be distinguished any more than ἔλεος and οἰκτιρμοί, which are used interchangeably”; Rudolf Bultmann, “ἔλεος, ἐλεέω...”, ThDNT II, R. Kittel, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 481. It must also be remembered that in the grace motto, *eleos* is used to represent both *hannun* and *hesed*, its second and last constituents (resp. ἐλεήμων and πολυέλεος).

⁶⁹⁰ Bultmann, “ἔλεος” 479.

⁶⁹¹ Art.cit. 480-481.

⁶⁹² Cf. Gerhard Sellin, “Lukas als Gleichniserzähler: die Erzählung vom barmherzigen Samariter (Lk 10 25-37)” [Cont.], ZNW Bd. 66:1 (1975) 50. Sellin also states that the concepts “neighbour”, “doing mercy” and *splangchnizesthai* belong together in a “very definite” sphere of theology derived from the OT: “Die Begriffe πλησίον, ἔλεος (ποιεῖν) und σπλαγχνίζεσθαι (bzw. σπλάγχνα) – Lk 10 33! – gehören gemeinsam in einen ganz bestimmten Sinn- und Traditionshorizont alttestamentlich geprägter Theologie”, art.cit. 49.

⁶⁹³ As mentioned before, the only exception may be Ps. 112:4, where the person who serves the Lord is called *eleēmōn* and *oiktirmōn* (ἐλεήμων καὶ οἰκτίρμων; the first part of the mercy motto). However, Ps. 112 is one of the psalms that “belong to the latest stratum of the Psalter” (*ThDOT*, vol. XIII 449), so that the usage of the word-pair in the psalm may be contemporaneous with the usage in the Test. XII, reflecting the same development in religious thought. Prov. 17:5 (LXX), in which a righteous man is described as being “compassionate” (ἐπισπλαγχνιζόμενος), does not rise to the level of an exception, as the adjective is not one used in the mercy motto.

⁶⁹⁴ Test. Sim. 4:4 “Joseph was a man very compassionate and merciful” (εὐσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων).

⁶⁹⁵ There is one way in which Jesus’ employment of the terms *splangchn-* and *ele-* differs fundamentally from the usage in the Test. XII. In Test. Zeb. 8:1, Zebulon instructs his children “Have compassion toward every person with mercy [ἔχετε εὐσπλαγχνίαν...ἐν ἐλέει], on order that the Lord may be compassionate and merciful [σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐλεήσει ὑμᾶς] to you” – for Zebulon, the motive for being compassionate towards all is to earn/serve/receive God’s compassion in return. This not unattractive view is related to other strands in

teaching, healing and feeding of gatherings of people, there is a universalist element implied: the Samaritan becomes the exemplar how humans should treat each other, disregarding and overstepping all boundaries that may exist between them. It is a trenchant choice of exemplar: Jesus Himself “oversteps” very clear boundaries and proscriptions existing between Jews and Samaritans by electing a Samaritan to be the *paradeigma* of his parable. His choice is “unorthodox” in more than one sense. One of the unspoken conclusions to which his listeners must have come was this: If even a Samaritan, who “worships what he does not really know”⁶⁹⁶ knows how to show compassion, how much more should we, who claim to have the true religion, not be shamed into showing compassion?⁶⁹⁷ Ultimately, this parable is an illustration of, or practical companion to Jesus’ teaching, including its all-encompassing application during the Sermon on the Plain recorded by Luke. Richard France remarks that Luke 5:43-47 “goes far beyond the purview of Lev 19:18 and introduces a concept of indiscriminating love which cannot be easily derived from the Pentateuch at all”⁶⁹⁸. This indiscriminating, all-encompassing orientation proceeds from the reality that God is kind (*chrēstos*) and merciful (*oiktirmos*) even towards ungrateful and bad people (Luke 6:35,36); therefore his followers must love their enemies, do good to those who hate them, bless those who curse them, be willing to part with their coat or cloak when the situation requires it, walk the extra mile with them (Luke 6:27-31, Matthew 5:40-41) – the precise actions that were performed by the Samaritan⁶⁹⁹. If one of his disciples or followers had asked at that occasion “Teacher, what must I do to be merciful like our Father is?” (Luke 6:36), He could well have answered with the Parable of the Merciful and Compassionate Samaritan.

Just like the Parable of the Compassionate Samaritan is an illustration of what human compassion entails, the Parable of the “Lost Son” is an illustration of what Divine compassion entails. In this respect, they are complementary parables, together constituting nothing less than a longer paraphrase of the *logion* of Jesus already mentioned: “Be compassionate [*oiktirmones*] just like your Father is compassionate [*oiktirmōn*]” (Luke 6:36). In the first

Jewish thought, for example that it is thanks to the righteous man that God bestows blessings on those around him. For talmudic and midrashic perspectives on this matter, cf. H.L. Strack & P. Billerbeck, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus erläutert aus Talmud und Midrash* (München: Beck, 1922), p. 372-376 on Mt. 5:45, and D.L. Bock, *Luke*, vol. 1, BECNT 3A (1994) 604 on Lk. 6:36. For Jesus, it is the opposite procedure: it is God who initiates compassion, and his children who must consequently show similar compassion. Their motive must be to emulate Him, and, by being compassionate, approach his perfection (become *teleioi*, Matthew’s substitute for Luke’s *oiktirmoi*).

⁶⁹⁶ Jesus’ *ipsissima verba* about the religious practice of the Samaritans; John 4:22.

⁶⁹⁷ One is reminded of Jesus’ healing of the ten lepers, of whom only the Samaritan leper returned, “praising God”, “worshipping Jesus and giving Him thanks” (Luke 17:11-19). Even though the man was a Samaritan, Jesus declares that it is his *faith* that saved/healed him (verse 19).

⁶⁹⁸ France, *Matthew* 223.

⁶⁹⁹ We are reminded of what Zebulon did when encountering a man without clothes: he stole into his own house and took a garment for the naked man (Test. Zeb. 7:1).

parable, Jesus gave an example of how human compassion was made practicable. In the second parable, He describes the way divine compassion “acts/plays out.” It is essential to note that the central motif in both parables is compassion⁷⁰⁰, despite the fact that not all commentators accord the concept such importance. This issue will in a short while receive discussion, as it is pertinent to the object of this study, which is partly an attempt to demonstrate the importance of the concept of *splangchn-* for a Theology of the New Testament, and a plea for the reception of this concept as a central category within a Biblical Theology, because it represents the entire complex of meanings inhering the Old Testament mercy motto.

This parable is a two-stage parable, like the *nimshal* in Matthew 18:21-35 which will be discussed in the next section. As mentioned earlier, it is part of the Lukan Sondergut. It is also the longest of Jesus’ parables. In this parable the setting or *locus* remains the same; it is time that elapses to produce a second “act”. On the day of the younger son’s return (the second act), there are two different scenes: one between the father and the younger son, and finally one between the father and the elder son. What takes place during the last scene allows for the concept of compassion to be further elaborated upon and expanded. This all-too familiar parable will be summarised briefly: the youngest son experiences the natural boundaries (in literal and figurative sense) of their *domicilium* as confining and inhibiting. He seeks his freedom by overstepping these bounds, again not only the physical borders of the *oikos*, but also by renouncing or nullifying the paternal and filial ties of loyalty and love that should exist between members of a family. When he returns, his reception by the father is not what he or the listeners would have expected: the father’s response is not one of judgement, reprimand and rejection, but a strange and wonderful mixture of deepest pity and greatest joy. Again, we see how the experience of pity is played out in four stages: we read in Luke 15:20 that the father saw (*eiden*) him from afar⁷⁰¹, experienced heartfelt pity for him (*esplangchnisthê*), ran to him (*dramôn*, present participle), and embraced and kissed him (*epipesen epi ton trachêlon autou kai katefilêsen auton*)⁷⁰². What true mercy is, is demonstrated in this single verse: seeing the person in their indigency and dejectedness, internalising this seeing by having pity for the person, being galvanised into action by going into the person’s presence, and by touching the

⁷⁰⁰ With an added perspective in the second parable; see following discussion.

⁷⁰¹ One receives the impression that the father remained on the constant lookout for the return of his youngest.

⁷⁰² Takamitsu Muraoko draws a parallel between this scene and Gen. 33:4 “Esau ran towards him [Jacob], and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they started weeping.” His other two examples, Gn. 45:14-15 & 3 Macc. 5:49 are less apt and more “generic”; T. Muraoko, “Luke and the Septuagint”, NT 54 (2012) 14.

person, thus ensuring them that your lives are now “involved”, “folded/wrapped” into each other.

There is another insight to be added: as time went by, many a father would have started losing their patience with the absent son. Diminishing patience often has growing anger or wrath as corollary. In this father’s case, any possible impatience or anger was tempered by his compassion. It is precisely this aspect of the father’s love which is developed in the second stage of the parable, in the interaction between him and his eldest. Where the youngest erased boundaries or overstepped them, the eldest draws boundaries. He “draws a line in the sand” between himself, and home where his father and his brother and the festivities are, and he refuses to step over this self-delineated border. Impatience and anger would not be inappropriate or unjustified responses to such small-spirited and petty-minded behaviour. What the father shows, is loving patience. The father dismantles the partition that the eldest son created between himself and his brother by his use of words “this son of yours” (as though they were not of the same parentage) by rewording it into “your brother”. The father cancels the eldest’s reproachful “never” (*oudepote*) with his own patient and loving “always” (*pantote*)⁷⁰³. The eldest son was not in an indigent position; he was not suffering loss, therefore the father’s response could not be heartfelt pity – the best, most fitting response would be patience. It is not hard to picture the father addressing his eldest, entreating him and trying to win him over in a soft-spoken and persuasive manner. Both sons may have qualified as “stubborn and rebellious” sons, worthy of the ultimate punishment (Deuteronomy 21:18-21), but the father’s compassion and patience have the last say. And now the rhetorical question: where is it that one finds the attributes of mercy/compassion and forbearance most closely linked? Most assuredly in the mercy formula, in which not only God’s pity, compassion and steadfast love are worded, but also the notion that He is slow to anger, longsuffering, very patient. It is hard to explore the meaning and message of this parable without acknowledging the mercy motto, especially as this is in the final analysis a *nimshal* about the divine disposition and dealings. God is a God who is compassionate (*eusplangchnos*) and of great patience (*makrothumia*)⁷⁰⁴. He is compassionate towards sinners (like the father towards the youngest son, who represents the tax collectors and other sinners), and/but He also patiently suffers the bigotry, distancing and rejection of religious people (like that of the eldest son who represents the Pharisees and scribes).

⁷⁰³ ἐμοὶ οὐδέποτε ἔδωκας ἔριφον “You never even gave me a kid goat” (Lk. 15:29);

τέκνον σὺ πάντοτε μετ’ ἐμοῦ “Child, you are always with me” (Lk. 15:31).

⁷⁰⁴ It must be remembered that Jesus told this parable (and the preceding two shorter ones) in response to the Pharisees’ and scribes’ criticism that Jesus consorted with sinners. His actions and the three parables are an illustration of, and confirmation that this is how God is disposed towards all sinners.

Recapitulating the considerations presented above, one could thus say the following: with regard to the Parable of the Compassionate Samaritan, it was said that the central theme was the notion of *splangchnizomai* (applied to human behaviour), and that this theme is continued in the complementary parable of the “Lost Son” (applied to the divine dealings). However, it would not do to acknowledge only the notion of *splangchnizomai* in the second parable, as there is a second element present in the second stage of the parable., namely “patience/long-suffering/forbearance.” It would be better to view the mercy motto as the matrix within which both the Parable of the Compassionate Samaritan, as well as both stages of the second parable is set. It was argued that nominal and/or adjectival inflections of *splangchna* gradually replaced the term *oiktirmoi/oiktirmôn*, not only in general in the New Testament, but also regarding the first epithet of the grace formula as found in the LXX: οἰκτίρμων καὶ ἐλεήμων (LXX) became εὐσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων in the Testament XII, the document concerning which the usage of *splangchn-* is the direct antecedent to New Testament usage. It is in the XII that we see these two epithets not only applied to God, but for the first time also applied to humans: Joseph is a person εὐσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων, “compassionate and merciful” (Testament Simeon 4:4) and God is a God who is εὐσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων “merciful and compassionate” (Testament Zebulon 9:7), or, in the words of James 5:11 πολὺσπλαγχνός καὶ οἰκτίρμων. This usage in the XII of the word-pair with reference to either God or a human being is continued by Jesus in his telling of the two parables. The first parable is an exposition of human compassion in which the verb *splangchnizomai* could be interpreted as representing the epithets “compassionate and merciful” of the grace motto. The second parable is an exposition of God’s compassion as well as his forbearance, with the concept of *makrothumia*, the third epithet of the grace formula, implied and developed in the second phase of the parable. Thus it could be concluded that the framework for this diptych of parables is the mercy motto. Regardless of whether this affirmation is found convincing or not, at the very least the centrality of the concept of compassion, even if “divorced” from the mercy motto, must be acknowledged. The most fitting title for this parable would not be the “Lost/Prodigal Son” - the eldest son was also “lost” - but even so the parable could not be called the parable of the “Lost Sons”. It is the Parable of the Compassionate and Patient Father⁷⁰⁵. Jacob Kremer calls this parable a “Gospel within the Gospel”⁷⁰⁶, and rightly so: it is an illustration of a compassionate and long-suffering Heavenly Father.

The discussion of the Parable of the Compassionate Samaritan and the Compassionate Father will now be concluded with an *excursus* which is an outcome of the above views, and

⁷⁰⁵ Arland Hultgren suggests “The Parable of the Father’s Love” or “The Parable of the Waiting Father”; Hultgren, *Parables* 70.

⁷⁰⁶ Kremer, *Lukasevangelium* 160.

at the same time an issue of relevance for the *rationale* of the present thesis, which is to advocate the mercy motto as a central category in Biblical Theology. Despite the fact that the concept of *splangchnizomai* is fundamental to both parables, very few of the consulted commentators and/or general theologians seem to give this notion its due. Furthermore, in most cases no mention is made of the mercy motto. Because of the arguable importance of the concept of *splangchnizomai*, as well as of the mercy motto, also for a Theology of the New Testament, comments about this omission by commentators *et alia* will now be given in the main body of the thesis, rather than being relegated to a footnote. The authors will be treated alphabetically, and not only the omissions or commissions concerning the concept in the two parables will be tabled, but also those pertinent to other pericopes.

François Bassin explains *esplangchnisthê* in Luke 7:13 (a pericope which will receive discussion in the next chapter) as “experiencing profound compassion”⁷⁰⁷, without pointing out that this experience is always transformed into actions. He is one of the few authors who do associate the concept of mercy/compassion with the grace formula, but the only instances of the formula which he cites are Exodus 34:6 and Psalm 103:8 (two of the seven occurrences). Josef Ernst discusses all three pericopes in Luke in which *esplangchnisthê* is found but has nothing to say about the concept in any of the three passages⁷⁰⁸, or of its possible relation to the mercy motto. Richard T. France refers to the “strongly emotional Greek verb *splangchnizomai*, which speaks of a warm, compassionate response to need” in Matthew 9:36, and states that it is “a verb which describes the Jesus of the gospel stories in a nutshell”⁷⁰⁹, but he does not explicate the verb any further in other places such as Matthew 15:32, 18:27 or 20:34. He also does not draw a connection between *splangchn-* and the concepts of mercy or the grace motto in the Old Testament. Heinz Giesen mentions the use of *esplangchnisthê* in Luke and links it with God’s mercy in the Old Testament, but not specifically with its Hebrew counterpart *ṣḥm*, and without any mention of the mercy motto. He also seems unaware of the usage of the verb in the Testament XII, as he says that the verb is found once in secular Greek, in a literal sense⁷¹⁰. Joachim Jeremias speaks of a “boundless love” with regard to the Samaritan in the parable, and of “the love of the Father” with regard to the parable of the “lost son”⁷¹¹; however, the concept that finds expression in both parables is compassion, not “love”

⁷⁰⁷ “...le Seigneur éprouva une profonde compassion pour elle...”; François Bassin, *L’Évangile selon Luc*, Tome 1 (Vaux-sur-Seine: Édifac, 2006) 243.

⁷⁰⁸ Josef Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, Regensburger Neues Testament, Jost Eckert & Otto Knoch, eds. (Regensburg: Pustet, 1993) under Lk. 7:11-17, Lk. 10:25-37 and Lk. 15:11-32.

⁷⁰⁹ France, *Matthew* 373.

⁷¹⁰ Heinz Giesen, “Gottes Zuwendung zu seinem Volk. Die Auferweckung eines jungen Mannes aus Nāin (Lk 7,11-17)”, *SUNT* 35 (2010) 17, fn. 17.

⁷¹¹ Joachim Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 8. Aufgabe (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970) 128-132; 200-203. In one of his subheadings (Subheading 2, p. 124), he does employ the concept “mercy” (“Gottes Erbarmen mit den Verschuldeten”).

or even “lovingkindness” (*eleos* as equivalent to the Hebrew *hesed*). It is also remarkable that he accords the term *splangchnizomai* no discussion in his entire book. In an article about the concept of mercy in Luke’s *Sondergut*, Hans Klein discusses all three pericopes in which the verb *esplangchnisthê* appears without elaborating on the concept or drawing a parallel with the Old Testament concepts of mercy or of the mercy motto. He only comments on the Greek verb when discussing the parable of the Merciful Father, but narrows its meaning to that of “acceptance of sinners” (*Sünderannahme*), which does not do full justice to the verb or to the import of the parable⁷¹². In his Commentary on Luke, his undervaluation of the notion of *splangchnizomai* becomes even clearer when he declares that, in the account of the raising of the widow’s son (Luke 7:11-17, with verse 13 containing the verb *esplangchnisthê*), verses 13, 14b and 17 could be dispensed with, making the account more streamlined⁷¹³. It is difficult to come to such a conclusion unless one approaches the pericope with preconceived ideas about a *Redaktionsgeschichte* behind the section.

Jacob Kremer considers all three relevant pericopes in Luke, and in each case translates the verb with “had compassion” (“hatte Mitleid”) but dedicates no further discussion to the concept or to its intertextual referentials⁷¹⁴. Maarten Menken acknowledges the centrality of *splangchna/splangchnizesthai* in the gospel of Luke, but bases this statement not on internal, exegetical evidence, but on “numerical analysis” which seems to be mainly numerical speculation⁷¹⁵. Except for placing the verbs in the perceived numerical centre, he does not elaborate on the notion of *splangchnizomai* itself. When referring to the occurrences of *splangchn-* in Matthew, John Nolland points out Jesus’ compassion for the crowd recorded in Matthew 9:36, and states the following: “Apart from 18:27...in Matthew compassion always addresses the physical needs of people”⁷¹⁶. He refers to Matthew 14:14 and observes that here, Jesus’ compassionate response is to heal people. That is the extent of his observations; with regard to the use of the term in Matthew 15:32, 18:27 and 20:34, he offers nothing more. Lastly: Brad Young contributed some valuable insights into the Parables of Jesus (such as

⁷¹² Hans Klein, *Barmherzigkeit gegenüber den Elenden und Geächteten. Studien zur Botschaft des lukanischen Sonderguts*, BThS 10 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1987) 33-38, 50-56, 74f.

⁷¹³ “V.13.16b.17 sind entbehrlich. Nimmt man sie heraus, wirkt die Erzählung noch kompakter”; Klein, *Lukasevangelium* 275.

⁷¹⁴ Kremer, *Lukasevangelium* 80f., 120f., 158f.

⁷¹⁵ Maarten J.J. Menken, “The Position of ΣΠΛΑΓΧΝΙΖΕΣΘΑΙ and ΣΠΛΑΓΧΝΑ in the Gospel of Luke”, NT 30:2 (Brill: Leiden, 1988) 107-114. He states that, in all 3 appearances of ἐσπλαγγνίσθη in Luke, it is placed within the “numerical centre” of a passage (p.114). However, in the case of Lk. 15:20, for example, he appears to choose a textual section at random (Lk. 14:1 – Lk. 17:10), seemingly in order to make the passage fit the numerology. He further seems to miscount the number of aorist forms in the parable itself (24, whereas I find only 23). In any case, it is not necessary to resort to numerical procedures to arrive at the centrality of the concept of *splangchna/splangchnizomai*.

⁷¹⁶ Nolland, *Matthew* 407, 589.

pointing out that the Samaritan's actions were a reversal of the robbers' actions), but he does not discuss the significance of *splangchnizomai* in the three parables where it is found⁷¹⁷.

If one has to glean insights relevant to the concept *splangchnizomai* from the above overview of 11 works by 10 authors, the following emerges: there is an intertextual correlation between *splangchnizomai* and the grace formula (Bassin, but giving incomplete intertextual references), or between the term and the Old Testament term \sqrt{rhm} (only Giesen); the term is central to the three passages in Luke and to some accounts in Matthew (only Menken and France), and it expresses the practical performance of pity (only Nolland). Out of 13 authors consulted, the only ones that accord the term more than passing significance are Michel Gourgues, Helmut Köster (both in relatively short articles)⁷¹⁸ and Klyne R. Snodgrass (in an informative work about the parables of Jesus)⁷¹⁹. This *excursus* is another apology for the importance of *splangchnizomai* and the grace motto in the New Testament.

6.2.2.2 The Parable of the "Unforgiving Servant"

The third and last parable of Jesus in which we find the usage of the verb *splangchnizomai*⁷²⁰ is the Parable of the "Unforgiving Servant", for which an alternative title more representative of the message of the parable will later be suggested. It is a unique parable in more than one respect: it is a parable only related by Matthew, not having a parallel in the other gospels, and therefore part of a surmised Matthean *Sondergut*. It is one of only two parables which unfold in two stages (the other one being the Parable of the Compassionate Father). During the course of the discussion, an attempt will be made to show that it is also strikingly unique with regard to a central category within Biblical theology.

Klyne R. Snodgrass refers to this parable and the Parable of the Two Debtors (Luke 7:41-43) with the following words: "The two parables...especially the parable of the Unforgiving Servant, are the most revealing and compelling of all Jesus' parables"⁷²¹. His reasons are that they exemplify the nature of parables and focus on the essence of the message of the Kingdom, namely grace and responsibility⁷²². The present writer believes that even more compelling reasons for the uniqueness of the parable related by Matthew could be offered.

The parable is preceded by pericopes in which Jesus deals with various aspects of sinning: tempting "little ones" to sin (Matthew 18:6-9), the Father's rejoicing in a sinner who returns to

⁷¹⁷ Young, *Parables* 101f., 119f., 130f.

⁷¹⁸ Gourgues, "La miséricorde..." 139-152 and Köster, "Σπλαγγχον" 548-559.

⁷¹⁹ Klyne Ryland Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent. A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

⁷²⁰ σπλαγγνισθεις, Past Participle; in the other two parables ἐσπλαγγνίσθη, Aorist.

⁷²¹ Snodgrass, *Stories* 61.

⁷²² Ibid.

the fold (Matthew 18:10-13), and the procedure to be followed with a brother who sins (Matthew 18:15-20). Then follows Peter's question: "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" (Matthew 18:21-22). Jesus answers with a parable. A striking aspect of this parable is the hyperbole which Jesus employs and which is one of the literary techniques of this genre: the first servant owes the king ten thousand talents, which is a staggering amount almost beyond computing: according to the Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament, a talent was equal to more than 15 years' wages for a labourer, which would mean that the servant owed the king an amount of 150 000 years' wages⁷²³. The other servant had a debt equal to about a hundred days' labour⁷²⁴.

Compassion, denoted by the participle *splangchnistheis*, is one of the central motives in the parable and constitutes a turning point in the first stage of its telling: the king has deep-felt pity and compassion on the servant and releases him from his debt. Some commentators also stress the importance of the concept *splangchnizomai* in the gospel of Matthew generally, or as a pivotal point in this parable specifically. Georg Braumann states that Matthew refers to the notion of mercy with the term *eleein* and *splangchnizesthai* more often than the sources that he used, in other words, Matthew added the terms in his reworking or re-editing of original sources⁷²⁵. Klyne Snodgrass also points out Matthew's "redactional focus on 'mercy'"⁷²⁶, citing many occurrences of inflections of *eleos* in this gospel. He also evaluates the concept of compassion worded in the terminology of *splangchn-* as "one of the four main features of Jesus' message"⁷²⁷. Richard France's observation that the verb *splangchnizomai* "describes the Jesus of the gospel stories in a nutshell" has already been quoted above. In contrast to the turning point in the first scene of this "parable in the form of a play", which pivots on the king's compassion which moved him to set his servant free from his debt, the turning point in the second scene is the unwillingness of the servant to have pity on his fellow-servant who was in debt to him (a debt which, in proportion to the enormous debt that he had owed, was negligible) and the king's wrath when hearing about this. The commentators who devote due attention to this parable are in broad consensus that the "moral of the story" or the "point of the parable" is that if God has forgiven us our immeasurable debt/sins, we should at all times forgive those who sin against us. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the parable is often titled either "The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant", or in a more positive way "A

⁷²³ Nestle-Aland, *Greek-English New Testament*, 11th ed., Barbara & Kurt Aland et.al., eds. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2008) 51. Klyne Snodgrass says that ten thousand talents would weigh 204 tons, art.cit. 66.

⁷²⁴ Nestle-Aland, *ibid*.

⁷²⁵ "Nun läßt sich der synoptische Vergleich erkennen, daß Matthäus öfter als seine übernommenen Traditionen vom Erbarmen als ἐλεεῖν und σπλαγχνίζεσθαι spricht", Georg Braumann, "Jesu Erbarmen nach Matthäus", *Theologische Zeitschrift*, vol. 19:5 (Basel: Reinhardt, 1963) 307.

⁷²⁶ Snodgrass, *Stories* 65.

⁷²⁷ Art.cit. 66, 140.

Parable about Forgiveness” or some related title⁷²⁸. In the light of the three preceding sections about sinning and of Peter’s question about sinning and forgiving, this title is quite justified. However, an interpretation of the parable will be attempted which would also lead to an amendment of the title.

To prepare the ground for the following discussion, some background remarks will be given. We have already seen that in pre-Christian as well as Christian usage, οἰκτίρ-, either employed on its own, or as an epithet in the first word-pair of the grace formula, gradually came to be replaced by the term *splangchn*-. This substitution takes place in Hellenistic Jewish documents such as the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, The Testament of Abraham and the Prayer of Manasseh⁷²⁹. In the Testament XII, the original first word-pair of the grace formula in the LXX, οἰκτιρμῶν καὶ ἐλεήμων (followed by μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος) becomes εὐσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων. In the Prayer of Manasseh, εὐσπλαγχνος replaces the entire word-pair, having acquired the same semantic import that the *hendiadys* had before: εὐσπλαγχνος μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος, “compassionate, patient and full of mercy”⁷³⁰. It was also pointed out more than once in previous sections that, in the Old Testament, the first word-pair of the grace formula often represented the full formula⁷³¹. In especially the Testament of Zebulon, verbal forms of *splangchn*- were evidently deemed adequate to carry the same semantic weight than the word-pair, with the result that verbal forms standing on their own still “summoned” the concept previously expressed by the word-pair (analogous to the use of the adjective *eusplangchnos* which represents the entire word-pair in the Prayer of Manasseh), so that the verb in turn could be used as a “shorthand” version of the grace formula. To sum up: the first two epithets of the grace formula are often taken as adequate to represent the entire formula, so that in later Hellenistic Jewish literature, the mercy motto is not worded in its full form anymore. This abbreviation is also the way in which James treats the mercy formula when he calls the Lord πολὺσπλαγχνός καὶ οἰκτιρμῶν (James 5:11). A verbal or adjectival inflection of *splangchn*- standing on its own is likewise deemed sufficient to represent the first two epithets of the mercy motto (Testament Zebulon, Prayer of Manasseh), if not the entire mercy formula. These preparatory remarks now lead us to analyse Matthew 18:23-35.

⁷²⁸ With the exception of Bible editions which do not contain headings above pericopes, 31 editions in various languages on the website “Bible Gateway” had a title containing the concept “forgiveness”, and 16 the term “unforgiving”; <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+18%3A+21-24>, accessed 7.7.2020.

⁷²⁹ Test. Sim. 4:4; Test. Zeb. 9:7; Test. Abr. (B) 12:12,13; Prayer of Man. 1:7.

⁷³⁰ The full verse 7 goes ὅτι σὺ εἶ κύριος ὕψιστος εὐσπλαγχνος μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος καὶ μετανοῶν ἐπὶ κακίαις ἀνθρώπων, “For You are the Lord, the Most High, compassionate, patient and full of mercy, rueing/repenting over the bad deeds of humans.”

⁷³¹ The second half of the mercy formula also serves as a “shorthand” version of the entire formula in some places in the OT as previously pointed out in chapter 1.

The first noticeable aspect about the parable is that the concepts of compassion, patience and showing mercy are equated. The servant pleads for patience (verse 26), to which the king's response is one of compassion (verse 27)⁷³². We have here an aspect which is not made explicit by Jesus in the parable, and which seems to be overlooked in commentaries: the king, upon learning that his servant had accrued a debt of enormous proportions – a debt that was to the detriment of the king's treasury – must have been beyond himself with rage and righteous anger. The attribute that dissipated and dispelled the king's wrath was patience. This is why the servant opted to plead μακροθύμησον ἐπ' ἐμοί, "Have patience with me", and not for example ἐλέησόν με or ἰλάσθητί μοι, "Have mercy on me"⁷³³. However, Jesus accounts for the king's response with the term "compassion", not "patience" as one might expect. The two notions, compassion and patience/forbearance could thus be seen as corollaries. In the second half of the parable, the king rebukes the servant for not having "showed mercy" in response to his fellow-servant's plea for patience, whereas the king had mercy on him (verse 33)⁷³⁴. The implication is that "showing mercy" is the manner in which patience is exercised. The three notions are all "of a piece"; they weave a semantic web. It is clear that, at the very least, this parable is an object lesson in response to Peter's question about how many times one is supposed to forgive somebody: the king's actions represent the divine dealings, and the pitiless servant anyone who is unwilling to practise constant forgiveness in turn. The divine dealings are also presented through a clear contrast between the concepts of patience and wrath⁷³⁵: the pitiless servant did not "pay forward" the bounteous mercy that he had received, and therefore forfeited the king's patience and earned his wrath. We have seen in the discussion of the Compassionate Samaritan that a parable could be a longer working out by Jesus of one of his *logia* worded during the Sermons on the Mount or on the Plain. Here we find another example: Jesus is giving a practical demonstration of the following *logion*: "Judge not, so that you may not be judged, for with the judgement that you pronounce you will be judged, and in the measure you give you will receive" (Matthew 7:1-2). In the parallel passage in Luke 6:37-38 two phrases are added after Matthew's "Judge not...": "Do not condemn, so that you may not be condemned, forgive and you will be forgiven" with the same verb used for "forgive" in Luke 6:37 and for "release" in Matthew 18:27, describing the king's actions toward the servant. There is also a very strong affinity between this parable and a *logion* or *theologoumenon* by James: "For judgement is pitiless towards anybody who shows no pity..."

⁷³² μακροθύμησον ἐπ' ἐμοί (vs. 26), σπλαγχνισθεῖς δὲ ὁ κύριος τοῦ δούλου (vs. 27).

⁷³³ The last plea is uttered by the tax collector in Jesus' parable about the Pharisee and the tax collector in the temple.

⁷³⁴ οὐκ ἔδει καὶ σὲ ἐλεῆσαι τὸν σύνδουλόν σου ὡς καὶ γὰρ σὲ ἠλέησα (vs. 33).

⁷³⁵ μακροθύμησον (vss. 26, 29), ὀργισθεῖς (vs. 34).

(James 2:13)⁷³⁶. Divine wrath is the appropriate and requisite response when divine mercy does not transform a person to emulate God's patience, compassion and mercy, of which the willingness to forgive is one of the manifestations. It is noticeable that, although the impetus for Jesus' telling of the parable is the question of forgiveness (which is alluded to by the phrases "released him" and "forgave him" in verse 27⁷³⁷), He places this issue within a more comprehensive framework, namely that of God's compassion, patience and mercy, which are all "of a piece" as observed previously. There could not be much doubt that the verb *splangchnistheis* should thus be accorded the central position in this parable. This does not preclude the opposite notion of God's wrath to be integrated into the framework, as will be elucidated presently.

It is at this point that a submission will be made for a more encompassing interpretation of the parable than is usually given. The present writer should like to propose that this parable is nothing but an exposition by Jesus of the mercy motto. We have seen that the key concepts of the parable are those of compassion, patience and mercy – which are the key words of the mercy motto, specifically as it appears in its amended, abbreviated form in later Hellenistic Jewish thought and also adopted in Christian writings. The verbal use of *splangchnizomai*, "having compassion" in verse 27 corresponds to the first two epithets of the grace formula, οἰκτιρῶν καὶ ἐλεήμων – it was pointed out earlier in the discussion, and also in previous chapters, that verbal forms and even adjectival forms of *splangchn-* standing on their own could be taken as semantically adequate to represent the entire word-pair. Even if this view is not accepted, then inflections of *splangchn-* must still be accepted as at the very least representing the first epithet of the first word-pair (*oiktir-*, which was gradually replaced by *[eu]splangchn-*). The Imperative "have patience" in verses 26 and 29 corresponds to the next epithet in the grace formula, μακρόθυμος ("patient/forbearing/slow to anger/longsuffering"). Regarding the third keyword in the parable, "showing/having mercy", one cannot claim without ado that it corresponds to the final epithet of the grace formula, πολυέλεος. If there is a correlation with the mercy motto, it may be an allusion to the second epithet of the first word-pair (ἐλεήμων), but even so, there still seems to be a strong affinity between the parable and the mercy motto. This affinity is strengthened by another intertextual allusion: in Exodus 34 verse 7, the verse following the mercy motto, we hear the following: "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty"⁷³⁸. Regardless of the fact that this *addendum* could be interpreted in varying ways, the fact

⁷³⁶ ἡ γὰρ κρίσις ἀνέλεος τῷ μὴ ποιήσαντι ἔλεος. One is also reminded of a pronouncement in the Wisdom of Solomon 19:1 ἀνελεήμων θυμὸς ἐπέστη, "Wrath came [upon them] mercilessly."

⁷³⁷ ἀπέλυσεν αὐτόν καὶ τὸ δάνειον ἀφῆκεν αὐτῷ.

⁷³⁸ The rest of verse 7 is an elaboration on "not clearing the guilty": "visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and grandchildren, on the third and fourth generation."

remains that this verse is at the very least a paraphrase of God's wrath or righteous anger. In this respect, the designation *orgistheis* ("having experienced anger/wrath"; Past Participle) in Matthew 18:34 harmonises with Exodus 34:7 and thus implicitly with the mercy motto in the previous verse⁷³⁹. God's grace is *gratis*, but if it is appropriated and not reciprocated towards others, this grace is forfeit and the wrath of God is earned. Klyne Snodgrass explains the "moral" of the parable as follows: "Forgiveness not known is forgiveness not shown"⁷⁴⁰. Perhaps it would be better to reverse the order: "Forgiveness/mercy not shown is forgiveness/mercy not known": the pitiless servant never acknowledged or recognised the mercy that he was shown, but simply appropriated it for himself and never "paid it forward." As a consequence, he deserved God's wrath⁷⁴¹.

It could thus be said that Jesus composes the parable in such a way that is nothing less than an object lesson in forgiveness, but at the same time He places this willingness to forgive within the matrix of the mercy motto in which the concepts of compassion, patience/wrath and showing mercy are integrated. He also makes it clear that there is a certain "procession" in the playing out of the realities presented by these notions. To explain this statement, another parallel to the message of this *nimshal* will be pointed out, namely in the Testament of Zebulon: "You also, my children, have compassion toward every person with mercy, in order that the Lord may be compassionate and merciful to you" (Testament Zebulon 8:1)⁷⁴². There is a different process implied by Jesus than the order which is suggested by Zebulon when he enjoins his children to be merciful and compassionate (employing the abbreviated form of the mercy motto): however attractive and well-meaning his exhortation, it conveys the impression that human compassion and mercy are the impetus for divine compassion and mercy. In the parable, the progression is different: the servant did not first have to release his fellow-servant from debt in order to "earn" a release from the debt that he owed the king. The king's "releasing" and "forgiving" him were initiated by the king's own compassion. It is after the servant had not treated his fellow-servant in kind that he earned the king's wrath. In terms of the principles revealed in the parable, Zebulon's injunction should be as follows: "Have

⁷³⁹ The parable may also help to explain an apparent inconsistency or anomaly in Exodus 34:6-7: why does it state that God forgives sins and keeps mercy for thousands, while at the same time it states that He visits those sins on countless descendants? The parable explains that this happens when his mercy is given in vain, without transforming the actions of the recipients. His wrath proceeds from this given circumstance.

⁷⁴⁰ Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories* 75.

⁷⁴¹ Although it cannot be accorded too much weight - it could simply be a matter of variation - another aspect could be pointed out which may serve as possible evidence that the parable is an exposition of the mercy motto: the parable starts out with the mention of a "king" (ἄνθρωπος βασιλεύς, found in the Dative in verse 23), but in subsequent verses, he is referred to as "the Lord" (ὁ κύριος; vss. 25, 27, 31, 32, 34), the same appellation found in Ex.34:6.

⁷⁴² ἔχετε εὐσπλαγχνίαν κατὰ παντός ἀνθρώπου ἐν ἐλέει, ἵνα καὶ ὁ κύριος εἰς ὑμᾶς σπλαγχνησθεὶς ἐλεήσῃ ὑμᾶς.

compassion towards everyone in mercy, so that the Lord will not visit/repay you in his wrath.” The duty to be compassionate, patient/forgiving and merciful flows from the reality that God is compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and full of steadfast love. In the light of this obligation, which is nothing less than a “debt of gratitude”, it is therefore also significant that the Parable of the Compassionate Samaritan, which is a discourse on human compassion, and this parable both include the term *edei* (“need/ought to”, “must”, “be necessary”) at the conclusion⁷⁴³. In both cases it is made clear that there is an onus on any human who has experienced God’s mercy to behave in a likewise manner towards their fellow-humans.

The discussion is nearing its end. As mentioned earlier, Klyne Snodgrass views this parable as unique, because it demonstrates the function of parables and underlines the fundamental principles of mercy and responsibility. John Nolland finds another exception displayed in this parable, namely that it is the only parable in which the verb *splangchnizomai* is not used to address the “physical needs of people”, but to address “forgiveness of debt”⁷⁴⁴. However, the parable is also unique in other aspects. It is a parable that resonates with the mercy motto in its exposition of the notions of being compassionate, patient/slow to anger and merciful. In addition, it is also a parable in which the mercy motto finds a double application: Luke’s two parables discussed above are respectively illustrations of human compassion (the Compassionate Samaritan) and divine compassion (the Compassionate and Patient Father). The parable in Matthew 18 is a synthesis, illustrating both divine and human compassion⁷⁴⁵. This feature also makes the Matthean parable remarkable⁷⁴⁶.

It only remains to reconsider the title of the parable. It was pointed out in footnote 726 that the large majority of versions and translations favour a title which contains either the terms “forgiveness/forgiving” or “unforgiving”. In the case of commentaries in which a title is

⁷⁴³ Mt. 18:33 οὐκ ἔδει καὶ σὲ ἐλεῆσαι τὸν σύνδουλόν σου, Lk. 15:32 εὐφρανθῆναι δὲ καὶ χαρῆναι ἔδει.

⁷⁴⁴ Nolland, *Matthew* 407 (in a discussion of Mt. 9:36).

⁷⁴⁵ It must be noted that not all authors interpret the implied Subject of compassion behind the exemplars given in the parables in the same way. Arland Hultgren sees both parables in Luke as expounding human conduct when he states that the verb *esplangchnisthē* in Lk. 10:33 and Lk. 15:22 “...is used in reference to persons who reflect divine compassion”, Hultgren, *Parables* 26. He does however see the verb in Mt. 18:27 as a “...reference to God, expressing the divine compassion that is revealed in Jesus (ibid.). Helmut Köster, in his article “Σπλάγχχνον”, says that the verb *splangchnizomai* “...is always used to describe the attitude of Jesus and it characterises the divine nature of his acts” (art.cit. 553) – except in the case of the three parables (discussed above) in which the verb is also employed: regarding these instances, he is of the opinion that the verb refers to humans (ibid.). He later adds that, in the three parables the verb indicates a certain human disposition (art.cit. 553-4). The present writer begs to differ from these views.

⁷⁴⁶ One aspect that could be inferred from this parable is its universalist application: if God in his compassion is willing to forgive/release a multitude of sins, would his compassion not also be visited on the multitude of gentiles? However, this notion is only implicit, and would need a type of midrashic development to be made explicit.

suggested, some titles are the following: “The Unforgiving Slave”⁷⁴⁷, “Acceptance of Sinners”⁷⁴⁸, “The Merciless Servant”⁷⁴⁹, and “The Merciful Lord and his Unforgiving Servant”⁷⁵⁰. If the verb *splangchnistheis* is accepted as the central and integrating motif, then the title must contain the concept of “compassion/compassionate” or “mercy/merciful”. The concept “forgiving” (or its opposite) cannot do full justice to the message of the parable, as forgiveness springs from a deeper source, namely divine compassion, of which forgiveness is but one stream. There is a third group of Bible versions or translations in which this aspect is taken into account by referencing the concept mercy, but most often in a “negative” way, speaking of the parable of the “Unmerciful Servant” or the “Servant who had no Mercy”, like some of the commentators quoted above. Brad Young’s title, “The Merciful Lord and his Unforgiving Servant”, which would sound even more apt and attractive if called “The Merciful Lord and his Merciless Servant” seems to do more justice to the full “moral” of the parable, but does not co-opt the notion of compassion. Perhaps “The Compassionate Lord and his Merciless Servant” would be a better option.

The following concluding observations could be made: in all three parables, compassion is the fundamental notion. The Parable of the Compassionate Samaritan is an explication of how humans should deal with each other. In the Parable of the Compassionate and Patient Father, we have an illustration of how God deals with both permissive or libertarian and legalistic or censoring people. Here, another concept is adduced to that of divine compassion, namely divine patience, which is implicit in the way the father interacted with both his sons. The last parable is a synthesis of the notions of divine and human compassion, with the two halves of the parable complementing each other. Whereas in the second parable the notion of patience was added to that of compassion, in the last parable the notions of patience as well as wrath and mercy are incorporated. With the first parable as starting point, one could say that there is a development of the concept of compassion which takes place and which culminates in an exposition of the grace motto in the last parable.

This leads us to the last category of occurrences of *splanchnizomai* to be considered. The category discussed in this chapter ended with a parable in two phases which represented the human and the divine manifestations of compassion. In the final category, we will see how the

⁷⁴⁷ Hultgren, *Parables* 21.

⁷⁴⁸ “Sünderannahme”, Klein, “Barmherzigkeit” 50.

⁷⁴⁹ Louise Schrottroff, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (Gütersloh: Gütersloh Verlaghaus, 2005) 257.

⁷⁵⁰ Young, *Parables* 119.

divine and the human aspects of compassion find embodiment in the person and actions of Jesus, who was both truly human and truly divine, “and God and yet a man”⁷⁵¹.

6.2.3 Compassion in the disposition and deeds of Jesus

There are four accounts in the synoptic gospels in which the demeanour and deeds of Jesus are described in terms of “compassion”, three times with the Past (Aorist) Participle of *splangchnizomai* (*splangchnistheis*, Mark 1:41, Mark 9:22, Matthew 20:34) and once in the Past (Aorist) Tense (*esplangchnisthē*, Luke 7:13). Table 7 given at the beginning of the chapter is here recapitulated in shortened form to give an overview of the four occurrences.

Table 6.2: *Splangchnizomai* referring to Jesus

Verse	Setting	Verbal form
Mark 1:41	Jesus and leper	καὶ σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἥψατο
Mark 9:22	Jesus and boy with unclean spirit	βοήθησον ἡμῖν σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς
Matt. 20:34	Jesus and two blind men	σπλαγχνισθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἥψατο τῶν ὀμμάτων αὐτῶν
Luke 7:13	Jesus and widow of Nain	καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὴν ὁ κύριος ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπ’ αὐτῇ

A few introductory remarks concerning all four passages will be given. The first is that the unfolding of compassion in three steps or stages proposed by Gourgues plus the added fourth step (that of touching) will again be applied to these passages, as this is one way to show that the way in which Jesus dealt with people was always an enactment of what He taught in his parables. The second remark which will be elaborated upon is that in three of the above-quoted passages compassion is the response to a plea, either worded explicitly, or implied by the context⁷⁵². The leper’s plea to Jesus is reported in a type of indirect speech with the words “beseeching him”, to which the term “kneeling/”on his knees” is added⁷⁵³, words and bodily gestures which seem to constitute a formal enactment of obeisance. At the very least, it must be assumed that the leper addressed Jesus with some words of supplication, if not with a standard formula and ritual. In Mark 9:22 the father of the boy with an impure spirit pleads to Jesus “Help/aid us”⁷⁵⁴, a plea for succour which is twice found in the Psalms⁷⁵⁵. This cry for

⁷⁵¹ The expression is from the opening line of a Middle English Lyric; *Medieval English Lyrics*, Maxwell S. Luria & Richard L. Hoffman, eds. (New York/London: Norton, 1974) 190.

⁷⁵² The widow of Nain does not utter any plea – she is busy crying.

⁷⁵³ Mk. 1: 40 παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν καὶ γονυπετῶν “beseeching Him and kneeling/falling on his knees.”

⁷⁵⁴ Mk. 9:22 βοήθησον ἡμῖν, with the addition of the Participle σπλαγχνισθεὶς, “Help us by having compassion.”

⁷⁵⁵ Ps. 44:26 (LXX 43:27) ἀνάστα κύριε βοήθησον ἡμῖν καὶ λύτρωσαι ἡμᾶς; Ps. 109:26 (LXX 108:26) βοήθησόν μοι κύριε ὁ θεός μου σῶσόν με κατὰ τὸ ἔλεός σου. In the parallel version in Matthew 17:14-21, we find the plea “Have mercy” (*Kurie eleêson*, verse 15) about which more will presently be said.

help is complemented by additional information gathered from the parallel passages in Matthew as well as Luke 9:37-42: like the leper, the father “kneels before” Jesus and “cries” “Teacher, I beg you...”⁷⁵⁶. It must be concluded that here again, the father was possibly enacting some formal ritual of supplication. However, the most formulaic entreaty in that time was the one voiced by the two blind men: “Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David”⁷⁵⁷ and also voiced by the father of the boy with the unclean spirit according to Matthew’s version (Matthew 17:15). Because of the linking in Matthew 20:29-34 of the *Kurie eleêson* formula to the concept of compassion, worded in the Passive Participle *splangchnistheis*, and also the indirect linking of the two concepts in parallel passages in Mark 9:14-29 (*splangchnistheis*) and Matthew 17:14-18 (*Kurie eleêson*), it would be meaningful to undertake a short *excursus* on the sequence of request and response which is either implied in accounts of Jesus’ interaction with others, or spelled out as in Matthew’s version of the healing of two blind men outside Jericho (Matthew 20:29-34).

The *Kurie eleêson* invocation appears 11 times in the Synoptic accounts, 10 times directed to Jesus⁷⁵⁸. As mentioned, there is one synoptic account in which we find both the *eleêson* plea as well as the term “compassion”, in Matthew’s account cited above. It is safe to assume that Jesus’ disposition of compassion and the healing deeds proceeding from his compassion were in many, if not most instances preceded by a plea for help. There is an explicit or an implied correlation between a request to Him and his response. This correlation is indicative of an underlying, fundamental and universal principle: to any condition or situation there is either an appropriate or an inappropriate response. To any action, there could either be an apt or an inapt reaction⁷⁵⁹. The proper response to beauty is appreciation, not depreciation. The apt reaction to receiving something good is gratitude, not ingratitude. The widow in Jesus’ parable expected measures from the judge requisite to her righteous cause (Luke 18:3). The Canaanite woman was not satisfied with Jesus’ initial responses to her pleading; she expected mercy to be the fitting response. Jesus Himself furnishes examples of appropriate and inappropriate reactions: He implies that it would be an improper response by a father, when

⁷⁵⁶ γονυπετῶν αὐτόν, Mt. 17:14, ἐβόησεν λέγων διδάσκαλε δέομαί σου, Lk. 9:38. *Deomai* has the meaning of “earnestly asking/beseeching.”

⁷⁵⁷ Twice, Mt. 20:30 & 31 ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς κύριε υἱὸς Δαυίδ. In some ancient manuscripts κύριε only appears the 2nd time.

⁷⁵⁸ Mk. 10:47,48; Mt. 9:27, 15:22, 17:15, 20:30,31; Lk. 17:13, 18:38,39. The 11th instance is in Lk. 16:24 (the rich man in Hades to Abraham). In the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, the tax collector’s plea for mercy is ὁ θεὸς ἰλάσθητί μοι (Lk. 18:13). The disciples’ cry for help in the boat during the storm, and Peter’s cry to Jesus when he found himself sinking into the water is κύριε σῶσον (Mt. 8:25, 14:30), a cry which is found nine times in the Psalms (LXX numbers given): Pss. 3:8, 7:1, 11:1, 30:17, 53:1, 59:7, 68:1, 85:2, 119:146, 118:146.

⁷⁵⁹ This truth is convincingly elucidated in a work by Clive Staples Lewis which is part literary criticism and part philosophy or an *apologia* for the notion of objective truth, *The Abolition of Man* (Glasgow: Collins, 1978).

asked by his son for bread or a fish or an egg, to give him a stone or a snake or a scorpion (Matthew 7:9-10, Luke 11:11-12). He pictures an improper response to suffering in the Parable of the Compassionate Samaritan when He relates that the priest and the Levite passed on the other side of the half-dead man lying next to the road (Luke 10: 31-32).

The above-mentioned principle could now be made more pertinent to the present discussion: the proper response to suffering is compassion. The fitting response to a plea for mercy is a show of mercy. Even in passages about Jesus' dealings with people in which a plea is not specifically mentioned, such a plea must often be implicit, as was already pointed out above regarding the accounts of the healing of the leper and the epileptic boy. The matter could be stated thus: when Jesus reached out in concern and compassion to others, there must often have been a prior supplication by the suffering party to Jesus to help or to show mercy. The two aspects are correlates: the one is summoned by the other; from the one the other could be inferred.

There are many pleas to God for mercy or for help recorded in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms, such as "save/deliver/rescue me"⁷⁶⁰ and "help me". The most-recurring formula in the Psalms is *[Kirie] eleêson me/hemas*⁷⁶¹ which is recorded 19 times⁷⁶². This usage in the Psalms is the obvious precedent for the usage of the formula as recorded in the synoptic gospels. Though this invocation was also current in pagan circles, its frequent occurrence in the Old Testament obviates the need to ascribe its usage in the synoptic gospels to pagan usage. It is possible that the use of the plea by gentiles like the Centurion and the Canaanite/Siro-Phoenician woman when addressing Jesus may be indicative of a pagan/gentile custom, but it is also possible that they became acquainted with the Old

⁷⁶⁰ ῥῦσαι με (14X in the Psalms), σῶσόν με (9X in the Psalms), ἐξελοῦ με (5X in the Psalms). Other supplications in the Psalms are "heal me", ἱάσαι με and "protect me", φύλαξόν με. Quotes are given from the LXX and not the Hebrew Bible, since supplication formulas in Greek are under discussion.

⁷⁶¹ As a matter of interest, it may be pointed out that the traditional Western transliteration of the Greek formula is *Kyrie eleison*. The "y" in *Kyrie* reflects the standard practice in English transliteration of substituting the Greek *upsilon* with "y" (while this second-last letter of the Western alphabet is in any case called "Ypsilon" in German and "ipsilon" in Italian, for example). The replacement of the "ê" by "i" (*eleison*) has a different history: during ca. 383-385, the Spanish nun Egeria undertook a pilgrimage to Palestine, recording her impressions in a journal, the *Peregrinatio ad loca sancta*, or *Itinerarium*. She mentions that she attended a Litany held for the dead, during which after the reading of the name of every deceased, a choir of boys responded (*dicuntur*, "spoke"/"sang") with the words "Kyrie eleison" – which is her transliteration, and thus gives an indication of how the word must have been pronounced in that place and time. Since then, her transliteration has been retained. Josef Andreas Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development* (Dublin: Four Courts 1986) 334.

⁷⁶² Nolland, *Matthew* 400 mentions that there are 17 instances of the formula in the Psalms, but his number does not tally. There is a single instance of οἰκτιρήσόν με "Be merciful/gracious to me" in Psalm 4:1. The LXX *eleêson* is always a rendering of the Hebrew *v'hnn*. The LXX version of Isaiah 30:19, which differs from the Hebrew, has ἔκλαυσεν ἐλέησόν με ἐλέήσει σε "He [the nation/people] cried 'Have mercy on me'; I had mercy on you." In Isaiah 33:2 we again have κύριε ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς.

Testament plea by having become *metuentes* or “God-fearers”, that is Jewish proselytes⁷⁶³. In contrast to “heterodox” explanations for the usage of the formula (ascribing its usage to heathen practices), there is also an “orthodox” approach, based on the insights gained through neotestamentical Tradition- and Redaction-historical methods, an approach which yields valuable perspectives, but which should be treated with some reservations. In an article exploring the concept of “mercy” (“Erbarmen”) in the gospel of Matthew, Georg Braumann states that the calls for mercy recorded there do have a Jewish background in religion-historical terms, but that a more important question is its *Sitz im Leben* in early Christian worship⁷⁶⁴. He continues by claiming that the focus should not so much be on a situation or event during the ministry of Jesus, but rather on early Christian worship (“Gemeindeleben”): “Die Frage, die sich stellt, ist nun die, ob sich eine Stelle innerhalb des *Gemeindelebens* [his italics] angeben läßt, an der man pointiert von Jesu Erbarmen sprach”⁷⁶⁵. It is clear that he views the *Kurie*-plea through a tradition- and redaction-historical (“traditions-“ and “redaktionsgeschichtliche”) lens⁷⁶⁶. The issue with this view is that, joined with notions from kerygma theology, it seems to ascribe the significance of the *Kurie*-request (and the concomitant response) to their position within early Christian cult and ritual, and not to the prior healing events which ensued from uttering the plea. Braumann accords the baptismal event in worship priority to the Matthean accounts of healing: “...das Erbarmen Gottes, erfahren *auf Grund der Taufe* [his italics], ermöglicht einen Zugang zu den überlieferten Wundern”⁷⁶⁷. It is beyond the scope of the present study to go into a detailed evaluation of these views, but the following observations could be noted: to the extent that this kerygmatic and tradition-historical approach could be incorporated into the Judaic perspective of the relationship between salvific events experienced in the past, and the reconstituting and reliving of those events by a participant through cultic practices in the present (in this case through

⁷⁶³ Some scholars find antecedents for the Christian use of the *Kurie eleêson* formula in pagan practices: P.H. Lang posits a connection between pagan incantations and the *Kurie*-formula, and states that the formula originated “in the Orient in pre-Christian times, and was used in pagan rites in honor of the Sun-god”; Paul Henry Lang, *Music in Western Civilization* (New York: Norton, 1941) 54. See Louis van der Watt, *Die Vroeg-Christelike Erediens en die Kyrie Eleison: ’n Historiese en Liturgiese Studie* (Stellenbosch: US, 2012) 85. However, this is not a view that could stand scrutiny. It is sound logic and also sound scholarly practice not to seek far-fetched and more unlikely explanations for some question when better and more feasible explanations are closer at hand.

⁷⁶⁴ Georg Braumann, “Jesu Erbarmen nach Matthäus”, *Theologische Zeitschrift*, vol. 19.5 (Basel: Reinhardt, 1963) 305.

⁷⁶⁵ “The question which presents itself is now the following, whether there is a place within the *congregational worship* where the compassion of Jesus was specifically mentioned”, Braumann, “Erbarmen” 306-307. He finds the *Sitz im Leben* of the plea in the baptismal rite (“das Taufgeschehen”), art.cit. 314.

⁷⁶⁶ “Das redaktionsgeschichtliche Problem der Bitte ‘erbarme dich’, das sich vor allem bei Matthäus stellt, ist also zunächst traditionsgeschichtlicher Art”, “The redaction-historical issue of the plea ‘have mercy’, which is present especially in Matthew’s case, is thus firstly one of tradition-historical nature”, art.cit. 312.

⁷⁶⁷ “The mercy/compassion of God, experienced because of baptism, allows access to the recounted miracles”, art.cit. 316.

the ritual, in words and gestures, of baptism), it certainly has value. However, priority could not be given to the present cultic “kerygmatic” event in preference to the past historical healing event, as Braumann believes when stating: “In dieser Weise wird der historische Jesus vom verkündigten Jesus her interpretiert”⁷⁶⁸. After all, if it is not grounded in a prior historical and factual event, there would be nothing actual and factual with which to substantiate the kerygma. Another reservation to his approach is the following: it is based partly on the view that the *Kurie eleêson* plea exhibits an “ecclesiastical tone” and a “firmly-formulated wording” and “styling”⁷⁶⁹ within Christian worship, with the intended or unintended implication that the plea found a fixed formula and a *Sitz im Leben* only with the inception and growth of Christian worship. The liturgical and ceremonial tone of the plea and its formulaic nature could however be adequately explained in terms of its usage within Jewish cultic tradition, which is an obvious antecedent to Christian cultic practices. The plea was already incorporated into Jewish worship long before the earliest Christian worship came into being; it did not need to be first established in and by Christian rituals.

This brings us to the discussion of the four accounts in which the compassion of Jesus is recorded.

6.2.3.1 *The Healing of the Leper (Mark 1:40-45; parallel accounts Matthew 8:2-4 and Luke 5:12-16)*

From the outset, there is an issue about the use of *splangchnistheis* (Mark 1:41) that has to be dealt with. In an interesting article, “A Leper in the Hands of an Angry Jesus”⁷⁷⁰, Bart Ehrman maintains that not *splangchnistheis*, but *orgistheis*, “angered/being angry” is the reading to be preferred⁷⁷¹. He points out that there are a few ancient manuscripts that have this reading, one of which is the Codex Bezae (“D”)⁷⁷². The strongest arguments in favour of this variant are the following: in the first instance, it is the *lectio difficilior*: it would be understandable if a scribe replaced “was angry” with “had compassion”, but it would be

⁷⁶⁸ “In this way the historical Jesus is interpreted via the proclaimed/preached Jesus”, *ibid.*

⁷⁶⁹ “...kirchlicher Ton”, *art.cit.* 309, “...fest-formulierte Worte”, “Stilisierung”, 305. Josef Ernst (with reference to Lk. 17:13) calls the invocation a “liturgical cry” and a “common plea”, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, Regensburger Neues Testament (Regensburg: Pustet, 1993) 365. Peter Fiedler also points to the “outright liturgical tone” of the plea, “*Matthäusevangelium*” 222 (cf. also 297), and the “ceremonial stylisation” of the plea 297. Neither pursues Braumann’s train of thought any further, or sufficiently acknowledges the role that Old Testament formulaic utterances may have played in the shaping of such pleas within Christian worship.

⁷⁷⁰ Bart Denton Ehrman, “A Leper in the Hands of an Angry Jesus”, *Studies in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, NTTS 33, B.D. Ehrman, ed. (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2006) 120-141.

⁷⁷¹ This view is shared by Suzanne Nicholson amongst others; entry “Mercy”, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013) 585.

⁷⁷² Ehrman, *art.cit.* 122. He mentions some “Old Latin manuscripts” without specifying; they are the following: a, ff² and r^{1*} (resp. 4th cent., 5th cent. and 7th cent.); Bauer-Aland, *Greek-English New Testament* 91, 715-716. The uncial Codex Bezae (“D”) is from the 5th cent.; Bauer-Aland 691.

inexplicable for a scribe to do the opposite; to replace a Participle which puts Jesus into a more positive light with a Participle which could be compromising to the image of Jesus. In the second instance, Ehrman points out that the parallel passages in Matthew 8:2-4 and Luke 5:12-16 are very close in wording to Mark's version (and probably based on it), but both Matthew and Luke happen to omit the term. Logic says that the term that was left out by Matthew and Luke must have been *orgistheis*: both have "no qualms" in describing Jesus elsewhere with the term *splangchnistheis*, so why omit it here? Therefore, *orgistheis* must have been the original, and must have been deliberately deleted by Matthew and Luke in order to "edit away" a less flattering portrayal of Jesus⁷⁷³. In the third instance, Ehrman also proffers intratextual indicators which could make *orgistheis* appear fitting, namely that in Mark, Jesus is more than once portrayed as being angry, frustrated or impatient⁷⁷⁴. *Contra* Bruce M. Metzger, who asks why scribes would alter the reading in Mark 1:41 to *splangchnistheis*, but not the other two readings in which Jesus is described as being angered (Mk. 3:5 and 10:14), Ehrman argues that in these cases, his *orgê* makes perfect sense⁷⁷⁵. Likewise, if the words of the leper were an expression of doubt, the angry reaction by Jesus would be quite understandable: "Jesus is angered when anyone questions his authority or ability to heal – or his desire to heal"⁷⁷⁶. In a *réplique* to Ehrman's article⁷⁷⁷, Peter Williams mentions that Codex Bezae differs from other early codices in several readings, and that the other supporting manuscripts are from locations where Latin was used exclusively⁷⁷⁸, so that inordinate significance should not be attached to the reading *orgistheis* in these versions. His main argument is essentially that *orgistheis* could have taken the place of the original *splangchnistheis* through scribal processes, and he bases this argument on orthographic considerations, but these considerations are rather tenuous⁷⁷⁹. He offers another argument which is more cogent, namely that *splangchnistheis* was a relatively unknown expression (although this might depend on the Jewish ancestry or not of the scribe), whereas *orgistheis* was a more general term, used 83 times in the LXX and apocrypha and eight times in other

⁷⁷³ Ehrman, "Leper" 125-126.

⁷⁷⁴ Some of the examples of this "other Jesus" that Ehrman gives directly or indirectly are Mk. 3:5 ("He looked around at them with anger"), Mk. 8:12 ("He sighed deeply in his spirit", seemingly from vexation), Mk. 10:14 ("Jesus was indignant" because the disciples held the children back), as well as Mk. 3:31-35 where it is related how He turned away his family. Another example could be added, namely Jesus' words of exasperation in Mk. 9:19.

⁷⁷⁵ Ehrman, art.cit. 127.

⁷⁷⁶ Ehrman, art.cit. 138; he also cites some examples, namely Mk. 3:1-6, 9:22-23 and 10:13-16.

⁷⁷⁷ Peter J. Williams, "An Examination of Ehrman's Case for ὀργισθεῖς in Mark 1:41", *Novum Testamentum* 54 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012) 1-12.

⁷⁷⁸ Williams, art.cit. 2-3.

⁷⁷⁹ He proposes the following process: a *parablepsis* from Π in ΣΠΛΑΓΧΝΙΣΘΕΙΣ to Γ in ΟΡΓΙΣΘΕΙΣ, together with the omission of ΛΑ in the first word, and/or a haplography of these adjacent letters, and/or a *parablepsis* from Γ to Ν with the omission of ΧΝ, a process which according to him is easy to suppose, but nevertheless seems rather complicated/convoluted; Williams, art.cit. 6.

parts of the New Testament⁷⁸⁰. Therefore, when confronted with an unknown term, a scribe might have substituted it by a familiar term; in fact, if *splangchnistheis* were the original (and unfamiliar) expression, this would be its first appearance in a Christian document⁷⁸¹. The following perspectives could be submitted in conclusion of this issue: the majority of codices and manuscripts support a reading of *splangchnistheis*, several of them older than the sources in which the reading *orgistheis* is found⁷⁸². In terms of numbers, age and scribal accuracy, they must be accorded importance. Nevertheless, the reading *orgistheis* cannot be explained away; either it is the one and only original version, or it must be posited that the two variants are part of two separate and independent traditions, one to which Mark had access, and the other to which Matthew and Luke had access, an explanation that begs more questions than it answers. For the purposes of the present discussion, and for reasons that will presently be given, the reading *splangchnistheis* will however be accepted, but with an attempt to accommodate both concepts in the discussion.

It is evident that *splangchnistheis* is the central concept in this short pericope: it describes Jesus' internal response to the plight of the leper as well as the external implementation or execution of the heartfelt pity that He experienced. As suggested earlier, it is clear that Jesus' actions were preceded by some form of worded plea from the leper, accompanied by a "body language" of supplication: he "was beseeching" Jesus (παρακαλῶν αὐτόν, Mark 1:40), he "implored Him" (ἐδεήθη αὐτοῦ, Luke 5:12), "kneeling" (γονυπετῶν, Mark 1:40), "fell on his knees before Him" (προσεκύνει αὐτῷ, Matthew 8:2), "falling on his face" (πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον, Luke 5:12). Rinaldo Fabris sums the leper's actions up very succinctly: "The son of Timaeus calls to the Son of David"⁷⁸³. The leper enacts a ritual of obeisance, and Jesus responds accordingly: He experiences compassion when confronted with this man's predicament. Although Gourgues' first step in the enactment of compassion, that of "seeing" the person in their suffering, is not mentioned, it is implicit. The third step, after that of experiencing compassion, is in a sense superfluous, as the leper had already come close to Jesus, but even so, we read that Jesus stretched out his hand - a gesture which bridged the last remaining distance and separation between Him and the man – and touched

⁷⁸⁰ Williams, "Ehrman's Case for ὀργισθεῖς" 8. His contention is somewhat weakened by his statement that "...σπλαγχνίζομαι is unknown outside biblical Greek" (art.cit. 8) – unless he views the pseudepigraphic Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs as "biblical."

⁷⁸¹ Ibid.

⁷⁸² Such as Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲱ) and Codex Vaticanus (B), which date from the 4th cent.; Bauer-Aland 690. Ehrman claims that the Diatessaron by Tatian (2nd cent.) supports a reading of *orgistheis*, but that seems not to be the case. Mk. 1:41-45a containing *splangchnistheis* appears in Section XXII:1-6 in the Diatessaron: cf. Hope W. Hogg, *The Diatessaron of Tatian* [Reprint] (Ann Arbor, MI: Charles Rivers Editors, 1895/2009) 144.

⁷⁸³ Rinaldo Fabris, "I ciechi vedono", parola spirito e vita (psv) 57, Alfio Filippi, ed. (Bologna: EDB, 2008) 133.

him with a healing touch⁷⁸⁴. It was stated before that true compassion entails a collapse of boundaries; it entails a blurring of the borders that distinguish and keep separate the spheres of *ego* and *tu*, of *meum* and *tuum*. In the parable of the Compassionate Samaritan, we saw how the lives of two persons living totally heterogeneous existences, being separated by issues of ethnicity, religion and social *mores*, became commingled, literally touching. In the interaction of Jesus and the leper, something similar happens. According to the prescriptions in Leviticus 13 (for example verses 1-8 and 45-46) a leper was ritually unclean and therefore also untouchable. But the compassion of Jesus knows no limits: whereas lepers had to live in isolation, separate from the community (Leviticus 13:46), Jesus breaks through the isolation by touching the leper; whereas most persons would experience aversion or revulsion if they had to touch a leper (which would make them unclean as well), Jesus' touch must have been loving, pitying and caring. The leper is called from his solitude into the presence of Jesus⁷⁸⁵. Even if no subsequent healing had taken place, the leper would in all probability still have felt that merely having been touched by Jesus was a transformative experience. However, in order to restore him to community, Jesus also heals the leper. He instructs the healed man to go to the priests in order to be declared ritually clean (or "cleansed", περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου, Mark 1:44) "so that it could be a proof for the people" – the proof that he was not unclean anymore would also be his permit to readmission into society.

There is another perspective which could be submitted for evaluation, and which will be elaborated upon, as it would surely be applicable to all of Jesus' healings. In the minds of Jewish believers, there was a direct relation between sin and sickness, between doing wrong and experiencing adversity. It was received wisdom in biblical times that, to have bad things happening to you implied that you committed bad deeds⁷⁸⁶. This notion is clear from several examples in the Old and New Testaments⁷⁸⁷, but it is at the same time one of the established religious tenets that Jesus subverted. A few examples will be given to substantiate this point of view. In Numbers 12, Miriam is struck with leprosy because she had angered the Lord through sinning⁷⁸⁸. In John 9, we read of the man who was born blind, and the almost comical reasoning which ensues when the disciples, in terms of their casuistic view of sin and

⁷⁸⁴ ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἥψατο (Mk. 1:41) All 3 synoptic gospels have the same words, with only the word order differing: in Mt. 8: 3 and Lk. 5:13 we have ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα ἥψατο αὐτοῦ.

⁷⁸⁵ "Il cieco esce dalla sua solitudine grazie alla presenza di Gesù...", "The blind man walks out from his solitude thanks to the presence of Jesus...", Fabris, "Il ciechi vedono" 133.

⁷⁸⁶ We find a long exposition on the link between obedience and blessings, and between disobedience and punishments in Deut. 28:1-68.

⁷⁸⁷ One staggering such example, especially when thinking of the Shoah, is Ps. 37:25, "I once was young, and now am old, but never did I see the righteous forsaken by God, or his offspring craving bread." In Psalm 73, Asaph words the anguish that he experiences on seeing the wicked prosper – but it is an anguish which he could only experience because of his "sin-sickness", "goodness-prosperity" or "evil-hardship" causal thinking.

⁷⁸⁸ Cf. Num. 12:10-11.

corresponding fate, try to decide whose sins were the cause of his blindness: surely it could not have been the man himself, because that would mean that he had sinned even before he was born, and how could that be? Therefore it must have been his parents (John 9:2). Jesus denies any such cause and effect. He does the same in respect of the Galilaeans who were killed on Pontius Pilate's orders, or the 18 persons who were killed when the tower of Siloam collapsed on them (Luke 13:1-4): in the minds of the people, they must have sinned terribly for such a terrible fate to have befallen them. Jesus relativises this explanation. To give this line of argument more pertinence: in Psalm 103, one of the three psalms containing the mercy motto, we read the following in verses 2-3:

Praise the Lord, O my soul,
And do not forget any of his good deeds;
Who forgives all your sins
And heals all your sicknesses.

The *parallelismus membrorum* in verse 3 makes it clear that to the psalmist, the one is mutual proof of the other. The evidence that his sins were forgiven was the fact that his diseases were healed, and the fact that his sins had been forgiven had as a consequence the healing of his sicknesses. This brings us to the pericope directly following Mark's account of the healing of the leper (Mark 2:1-12): when Jesus tells the paralysed man who was let in through the roof that his sins were forgiven, the scribes took offense against this "blasphemy". To prove to them that the paralytic's sins had indeed been forgiven – a fact that could not be determined forensically – he heals him. Healing implied forgiveness, forgiveness implied healing; the one does not stand without the other.

Thus, in the leper's case, there is a reasonable probability that he as well as the community viewed his condition as evidence that he was a sinful man. If this was the case, it would then also not be too implausible to suppose that, in terms of their own causal interpretation of things, the leper and the people witnessing the healing might have concluded, or taken for granted, that the man's sins had been forgiven. This sheds even more light on what the compassion of Jesus entailed: one could without much fear of contradiction assert that He did not confine Himself to the physical healing of the leper, but directed Himself to the man's psychological and spiritual healing as well, by setting him free: free of his guilt and free of his seclusion. Even the man's social position was revived through Jesus' beneficent actions: we read that he now freely moved about, talking to people about what Jesus did. From having been an outcast, he advances to being a herald or town crier. In the account of the leper's healing, we see that the compassion of Jesus is "all-encompassing", and its consequences expand in ever-widening circles.

There are a few concluding perspectives regarding the concept “being angered” that could be offered. It opens the way to an interesting parallel between a parable of Jesus and his practical conduct. In the Parable of the Merciful King, it must be taken for granted that the king’s first response on hearing about the servant’s squandering of the royal fiscus must have been anger. However, his anger is tempered by his compassion. Taking *orgistheis* in Mark 1:41 as the original reading would not alter the message of this pericope but might even engage the mercy motto to a greater extent. If the leper’s words “If you are willing, you could cleanse me” are taken as a type of concessional clause expressing doubt, it is quite possible and understandable that Jesus became angry⁷⁸⁹. His subsequent actions are however a negation of his initial anger and remain an accomplishment of compassion. Time and again, we read in the Old Testament how God’s love and mercy overcome his righteous wrath. The story of Jonah and Nineveh, with his katamempsic recital of the mercy motto as the apogee of the account, is one example of God’s patience conquering his wrath; the parables of the Compassionate and Patient Father and of the Compassionate King and the Merciless Servant, in which the father’s and the king’s righteous anger is abated by their patience and compassion, are other shining examples. Jesus does not “act out” his anger at the leper’s lack of faith but lets Himself be guided by his own compassion. In a striking way, the alternative reading of *orgistheis* manages to pull together the threads of the grace formula in this account: the righteous anger of Jesus is dissipated by his *makrothumia*, and he makes his compassion manifest by “doing mercy” to the leper, just as the king did to his servant in the parable. Mark’s report of the healing of the leper resonates with all the many passages in the Old and New Testament in which God’s compassion, patience and mercy are attested.

6.2.3.2 *The Healing of the Boy with an Unclean Spirit (Mark 9:14-29; parallel accounts Matthew 17:14-21 and Luke 9:37-42)*

If one conflates the three synoptic accounts of this event, the following emerges: the setting is a place somewhere along Jesus’ and his disciples’ wanderings between Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27) and Galilaea (Mark 9:30). After the transfiguration of Jesus, He and the three disciples elected to accompany Him come down from the mountain to meet with the rest of the disciples who are debating with some scribes, with a large crowd gathered around them. When Jesus enquires after the subject of their discussion, a man answers from among the crowd that he has brought his son, afflicted with a “dumb spirit” (πνεῦμα ἄλαλον, Mark 9:17) to be healed. Mark and Luke relate that the boy was afflicted with an “unclean spirit” (πνεῦμα ἀκαθάρτον, Mark 9:25, Luke 9:42). According to Matthew, the boy was “moonsick”

⁷⁸⁹ This possible reservation about his ability to heal may be the reason for the next pericope about his healing the paralysed man: it is accounted in such a way that there could be little doubt about his divine authority and power.

(σεληνιάζεται); the symptoms point to epilepsy⁷⁹⁰. The father's demeanour and conduct are clearly enactments of supplication: he begs Jesus to help them and have compassion on them (βοήθησον ἡμῖν σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐφ' ἡμᾶς, Mark 9:22), while Matthew reports that the father approached Jesus, knelt before Him (γονυπετῶν αὐτὸν, Matthew 17:14), and pleaded "*Kurie eleēson*", which, as was mentioned before, was an expression favoured by Matthew. What is significant in respect to the two versions, is that the concepts "have compassion/pity" and "have mercy" are correlated. Luke states that the man "begged/beseeched" Jesus (direct speech; δέομαί σου, Luke 9:38). In all three gospels it is narrated that when the father informed Jesus that the disciples had not been able to cast out the spirit, Jesus became vexed, exasperated or impatient; his words are almost identical in all three versions, with Matthew and Luke adding "perverse" to Mark's narration of Jesus' words "O faithless generation..."⁷⁹¹. He then heals the boy instantly and returns him to his father.

After this brief *résumé*, some observations pertinent to the present study will be made. The pericope could be interpreted in terms of a "request-response dynamic": in the absence of Jesus, the father first asked the disciples to heal his son (εἴπα, Mark 9:18); Luke states that he begged/earnestly beseeched them (ἐδεήθην, Luke 9:40) adding that this was his only child⁷⁹². The father's requests, which were in vain, are redirected to Jesus, but in a more urgent and intensified form: according to Mark 9:22, he begs Jesus to help and to have pity on them. This raises some interesting matters: if the conversation between the father and Jesus took place in Greek, and accepting that Mark is the oldest of the three synoptic gospels and that the reading in verse 22 represents the *ipsissima verba* of the father, this would make it the only instance in the New Testament in which we find the term *splangchnistheis* not worded by Jesus, but by a person from the "crowd" who addresses Jesus using this term⁷⁹³. Even if this were not the original term used by the father, at the very least it is then an indication that *splangchnizomai* was a term with which Mark was familiar, that it was a term which already enjoyed reception in the decades around the ministry of Christ, if not earlier, and lastly that Mark found in this denotation the most apt parallel to the words of the man's supplication, regardless whether it was uttered in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek. Also interesting is that

⁷⁹⁰ R.T France points out that this labelling is used only twice, the second instance being in Mt. 4:24 (σεληνιαζομένου). It is the Masculine Plural Accusative of the Present Participle.

⁷⁹¹ Mk. 9:19 ὃ γενεὰ ἄπιστος, Mt. 17:17 & Lk. 9:41 ὃ γενεὰ ἄπιστος καὶ διεστραμμένη. Perhaps a translation of "contrary" or "warped" would make more sense to a (post-)modern mind than "perverse."

⁷⁹² Hans Klein mentions that in the synoptic gospels it is only Luke that employs the word μονογενής ("only-born"). All 3 occurrences are in accounts of miracles: Lk. 7:12 (the son of the widow of Nain), 8:42 (the daughter of Jairus), and 9:38 (the epileptic boy), Hans Klein, "Barmherzigkeit gegenüber den Elenden und Geächteten. Studien zur Botschaft des lukanischen Sonderguts", *Biblisch-Theologische Studien* 10 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1987) 36 and footnote 11.

⁷⁹³ If the man had addressed Jesus in Hebrew/Aramaic, he would probably have used the plea חַנּוּנֵנוּ (*ḥannēnû*, "have mercy on us"), which is the most frequent wording of supplication in the Psalms/Old Testament.

Matthew replaces the father's words according to Mark with the plea *Kyrie eleēson*, a choice which not only points to Matthew's predilection for an *eleos*-terminology⁷⁹⁴, but a choice which offers some interesting perspectives: as pointed out under subsection 2.3 above, this was the LXX translation of the Hebrew supplication יְיָיָהּ (ἐλέησόν με, "Have mercy on me") or יְיָיָהּ (ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς, "Have mercy on us"). Matthew is either translating Mark's Hebrew, or supplying a synonym/parallel term for Mark's *splangchnistheis* when he substitutes his term⁷⁹⁵, a substitution which would then support the view that the expressions "having/showing mercy" and *splangchnizomai* share the same semantic field (at least in the Matthew's gospel): as was pointed out in the discussion of the Parable of the Merciful King and Merciless Servant (Matthew 18:21-35), the concepts of *splangchnizomai* and *eleein* are equated⁷⁹⁶.

Regarding the "responsive component" of the posited request-response structure of the narration, we again have an initial response by Jesus of frustration or exasperation, although this time not directed to the supplicant (as in the case of the leper discussed above), but seemingly directed to his disciples. Once more, his reaction is understandable, especially when taking into account that when He sent them on their mission (Mark 6:7-13), He specifically gave them "authority over unclean spirits" (Mark 6:7, Matthew 10:1)⁷⁹⁷; now it seems as though they had lost or abandoned this authority, something which He finds insufferable⁷⁹⁸. However, he does not give implementation to his anger; just like the king in his parable, he lets his indignation be overcome by his long-suffering, and heals the boy, which is nothing but an act of compassion and mercy. He does not allow the disciples' lack of faith to become self-fulfilling regarding the boy's plight. Again, we have a complex of notions associated with the mercy motto: the earnest plea by the father in words and bodily gestures performing an act of supplication, the appeal to compassion, central to the mercy motto, the tense interaction between vexation and forbearance, and the act of *poiein eleos*, "doing mercy." It would be facile to simply apply the steps suggested by Gourgues to the implementation of Jesus' compassion: firstly, because of the throng, He was apparently unable to see or to go to the boy (according to all three accounts, He has to ask for the boy to be brought to Him). Gourgues' third step, which entails Jesus' going closer to the suffering party,

⁷⁹⁴ "Die Bitte um *Jesu Erbarmen* [italics in original] läßt sich in verschiedenen Schichten der neutestamentlichen Überlieferung nachweisen, besonders häufig allerdings im Matthäus-Evangelium", Braumann, "Jesu Erbarmen" 305; "Nun läßt sich der synoptische Vergleich erkennen, daß Matthäus öfter als seine übernommenen Traditionen vom Erbarmen als ἐλεεῖν und σπλαγχνίζεσθαι spricht", art.cit. 307.

⁷⁹⁵ Luke's parallel version records no plea.

⁷⁹⁶ Subsection 2.2.2. To an extent, the concept *makrothumein* could also be included in the equation.

⁷⁹⁷ ἐδίδου αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν ἀκαθάρτων, Mk. 6:7, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων, Mt. 10:1. Luke has "demons" (*daimonia*, Lk. 9:1). On this mission, the disciples seemed to have had success: they "went healing everywhere" (Lk. 9:6) and "cast out many demons" (Mk. 6:13).

⁷⁹⁸ Luke's account of the Mission of the Twelve and of the cleansing of the boy are moreover in the same chapter (9:1-6 and 9:37-43).

also does not seem to take place, which again could readily be explained: He had to keep a certain distance as the boy was having convulsions⁷⁹⁹. When the boy had recovered, He did take him by the hand and lifted him up - thus fulfilling the “fourth step” – whereupon the boy arose⁸⁰⁰.

A few remarks could be made to conclude this subsection. In the healing of the epileptic boy, we have an example of how Jesus extended his compassion to somebody who did not and could not ask for it – after all, the boy was inarticulate/dumb (*alalos*)⁸⁰¹. The boy’s father asks vicariously for his healing, and both become recipients of Jesus’ compassion: the boy because he was healed, and the father because his son was restored to him in a way that he had not been before. For both, and for the mother and his siblings, who must have been suffering together with the father over the plight of their child and brother, it meant the rebirth of their family, with the boy now fully integrated into the family life. The compassion of Jesus always leads not only to a return to sanity and normality, but also a return to community. For the entire family, it must have been a liberating experience in another sense: in all probability, they were now free from any guilt or doubt whether the boy’s condition might have been because one of them or the boy himself had sinned. His healing signified acquittal. It is not hard to see the healing wonders performed by Jesus as an *encore* of events worded in the Psalms. The boy was not only epileptic, he was also tongue-tied. In Psalm 51:15 we read “Open/unseal my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall sing your praise.” It is hard not to imagine that the boy’s and his parents’ lips must have been overflowing with praise and gratitude. All these moments were fruits of divine compassion.

6.2.3.3 *The Healing of the blind men (Matthew 20:29-34; parallel accounts Mark 10:46-52, Luke 18:35-43; cf. Matthew 9:27-31)*

It is almost certain that the accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke (leaving Matthew 9:27-31 aside) are versions of the same event. Besides the general fact that Mark often serves as source for Matthew and Luke, we have the same location, similar wordings and the same sequence of wordings in the three narratives. In three respects do the three synoptic versions

⁷⁹⁹ Mk. 9:25, Lk. 9:42.

⁸⁰⁰ This detail is only recorded in Mark 9:27. Although not germane to the discussion, there are striking parallels between Jesus’ gestures regarding the boy and other instances. In Matthew’s account of the Transfiguration, the event directly preceding the healing of the epileptic boy in all 3 synoptic gospels, we read that the three disciples were dazzled and overcome, lying on the ground. Jesus approaches them, touches them and tells them to get up (Mt. 17:7). In the case of the daughter of Jairus, the same sequence takes place of going to her, touching her and telling/helping her to get up (Mk. 5:41, Mt. 9:25, Lk. 8:54). The raising of the widow’s son (Luke 7:11-17), which exhibits a similar sequence, will receive attention in the last subsection.

⁸⁰¹ Other examples of vicarious supplication are that of the Centurion pleading for his servant (Mt. 8:5-13; Lk. 7:1-10), Jairus, the leader of the synagogue pleading for his daughter (Mt. 9:18-19, 23-26; Mk. 5:21-24, 35-43; Lk. 8:40-42, 49-56) and the Canaanite/Syro-Phoenician woman for her daughter (Mk. 7:24-30, Mt. 15:21-28).

not concur: while Mark and Luke have one blind man (with his name, Bartimaeus, provided by Mark), Matthew has two, just as in his seemingly unrelated report in chapter 9:27-31. Secondly, there is not concord regarding the wording of the plea directed to Jesus (see below). Thirdly, it is only according to Matthew that Jesus touched the blind men. The agreements between the three accounts are the following: the location was outside Jericho, the blind man or men were “sitting by the roadside”, he/they “heard” or were “told” that “Jesus was passing by”; in Mark and Luke the single blind man “cried”⁸⁰² or “began crying out”⁸⁰³ “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”, while the two blind men in Matthew’s version “cried out”⁸⁰⁴ “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”. In all three narrations the cry is repeated, with “Lord” added by Matthew the second time⁸⁰⁵. Then “Jesus stopped”, “called them”⁸⁰⁶ or had him/them called⁸⁰⁷, asked “What do you want me to do for you?” and finally granted his/their worded request by declaring that he/they had been healed⁸⁰⁸.

Regarding Matthew’s account, the following matters could be pointed out: again, there is an obvious correlation between request and response, or between the plea and the granting of the plea. Interestingly, we have a doublet of request and response in this passage: the blind men call out “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” upon which Jesus’ response is to call them and ask them what they want Him to do for them. Their response is a second, but now specified request, and his final response is one of compassion, manifested in a miracle of healing. Matthew’s addition of *splangchnistheis* in his version is significant: not only does it again demonstrate his partiality for the vocabulary of mercy⁸⁰⁹, but it implies that he equates the act of having mercy with the concept of *splangchnizomai*. The requisite response to a plea for mercy is having compassion and demonstrating compassion through practical intervention in the situation of the afflicted person, a process which evokes God’s way with Israel in the Old Testament⁸¹⁰. The steps in the unfolding of compassion could again be deciphered, though in a slightly different order. It is clear that they were at a distance from Jesus, but probably because of the great throng (*ochlos polus*), He is unable to approach them. He bridges the distance between them by calling them or having them called to him⁸¹¹ - they call

⁸⁰² ἐβόησεν, Lk. 18:38.

⁸⁰³ ἤρξατο κρᾶζειν, Mk. 10:47.

⁸⁰⁴ ἔκραξαν, Mt. 20:30.

⁸⁰⁵ ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς κύριε υἱὸς Δαυίδ, Mt. 20:31.

⁸⁰⁶ ἐφώνησεν αὐτοὺς, Mt. 20:32.

⁸⁰⁷ εἶπεν φωνήσατε αὐτόν, Mk. 10:49; ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὸν ἀχθῆναι πρὸς αὐτόν, Lk. 8:40.

⁸⁰⁸ Only Matthew has the detail that “Jesus, having compassion for them, touched their eyes” (Mt. 20:34).

⁸⁰⁹ Already pointed out under footnote 792 with reference to Braumann, “Jesu Erbarmen” 305, 307.

⁸¹⁰ Of the four gospels, Matthew is probably the one which most evokes the Old Testament and its themes: “Matthew also has at least sixty quotations from the OT [sic] and a large number of allusions. He quotes the OT at least twice as often as any other Gospel writer. Here is a work saturated with the OT”, Nolland, *Matthew* 29.

⁸¹¹ Gourgues’ third step.

Him, and his response is to call back. To his hearing of their cry is added his desire also to see them face to face⁸¹². The sight of the sightless men fills Jesus with compassion, and the final accomplishment of his compassion is the act of touching them on their eyes⁸¹³, whereupon they are healed⁸¹⁴.

In all three synoptic accounts, Jesus is addressed as “Son of David.” According to Richard France, this naming occurs seven times in Matthew, of which the first time is in his similar account of the healing of two blind men (Matthew 9:27)⁸¹⁵. The title only appears once in the gospels of Mark and Luke, in the case of both authors also in connection with the healing of the blind man. Peter Fiedler is of the opinion that the title does not refer to the messiah, but to Solomon, David’s son and successor, who in Jewish tradition became associated with exorcisms and healings⁸¹⁶. His view does not have much support: “Despite strands of Jewish tradition which link Solomon as son of David and exorcism, there is no real basis for linking ‘Son of David’ as a messianic title with an expectation of a healing messiah (cf. Luz, *Matthäus*, 2:59-61)”⁸¹⁷. The use of the title here must be taken as an acknowledgement by the two blind men as well as an attestation by Matthew that the promised messiah, who would bring about a renewal of circumstances and events at the end of days, had indeed arrived in the person of Jesus. In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, we have one of the documents in which the coming of the messiah and his dispensation of compassion is anticipated⁸¹⁸. The other title used in Matthew’s account, and only there, is the title “Lord” (*kurios*, in the vocative *kurie*, verses 30 and 31)⁸¹⁹. It may be possible to distinguish between the meaning that Matthew attached to the term, and the meaning that the speaker(s) who addressed Jesus attached to the term (if and when the term *kurios/kurie* were included in the plea): the designation “Lord” could be the LXX equivalent of the Hebrew YHWH, could imply a messianic title, or could simply be a honorific applied to a person of status and authority. It is not always possible to determine which concept was associated with the term in the mind of a speaker. However, addressing Jesus as Lord must have been “some sort of recognition of his significance”⁸²⁰, and the term must have indicated some elevated title and position and not merely a courteous

⁸¹² Gourgues’ first step.

⁸¹³ ἤψατο τῶν ὀμμάτων αὐτῶν, Mt. 20:34. As already mentioned, this detail is only recorded in Matthew.

⁸¹⁴ In Mark and Luke, the blind man receives his sight upon Jesus’ spoken words.

⁸¹⁵ France, *Matthew* 366. However, his numbers do not tally, and he does not give citations. The present author finds 9 occurrences: Mt. 1:1, 1:6, 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30&31, 21:9&15.

⁸¹⁶ “...der in der jüdischen Tradition zum Exorzisten und Heiler geworden war...”, Fiedler, *Matthäusevangelium* 222.

⁸¹⁷ Nolland, *Matthew* 400, footnote 216.

⁸¹⁸ “In compassion, the Lord will visit all the nations...” (Test. Levi 4:4; cf. Test. Zeb. 9:8, Test. Naft. 4:5).

⁸¹⁹ Some codices and manuscripts contain the term only in verse 31, some not at all. Several ancient and reliable sources do however support these readings, especially for verse 31, such as \aleph , B and D; Bauer-Aland, *Greek-English New Testament* 57.

⁸²⁰ Nolland, *Matthew* 339.

way of addressing Jesus⁸²¹. Although this is not a view that could be substantiated beyond a shadow of doubt, it is possible that Matthew's use of *Kurios* hints at the Lord of the Old Testament. Besides the more facile facts that *kurios* is the LXX equivalent for the Hebrew "LORD", and that the Old Testament serves as matrix for Matthew's gospel to a greater degree than in the case of the other gospels, a perspective by Richard France could secondly be offered: in Matthew 9:13, Jesus quotes God's words in Hosea 6:6 "I desire mercy [*e/leos* in the LXX], not sacrifice". Later in the same chapter, two blind men beg Him to have *eleos* on them⁸²². One has the impression that by healing the blind men, Jesus has taken a divine initiative to demonstrate what God means by "mercy." The account in chapter 20 becomes a reiteration of this notion. A third perspective could be added: in the conduct of Jesus, we see a demonstration of the dealings of God with Israel and with individual believers. God's way with individual believers is witnessed especially in the psalms. There is a strong tie between Matthew's account and the Psalms given in the *Kurie eleêson* invocation⁸²³. The usage of the term "cried out" with reference to the blind men (*ekraxan*, Matthew 20:30 & 31) strengthens this tie, as it is a term employed many times in the Psalms when the suffering party invokes God's mercy⁸²⁴. There is another intertextual connection to be found, namely in the theme of blindness, a connection which will receive attention at the end of this section.

A further aspect about Matthew's account of Jesus' interaction with the blind men is mentioned by Braumann and could be adduced: it was pointed out earlier that the compassion that Jesus experienced for the crowds was sometimes prompted by their hunger for teaching, besides their need for healing or for food⁸²⁵. Preceding the story of the blind men, there is a long section of the gospel, chapter 17:22 to 20:28 (98 verses), which is almost exclusively concerned with teachings of Jesus. If one takes as point of departure the fact that Jesus' compassion for the crowds sometimes found expression through teaching, one could by extension argue that it is not entirely infeasible that the teachings of Jesus recorded in the section mentioned could likewise be seen against the background of his compassion. With the narrative of his dealings with the blind men, the focus shifts from his teaching activity to his healing activity, the second of which is a more patent expression of his compassion, and which was in any case another way in which his concern for the crowds was manifested. "It seems as though the compassion

⁸²¹ "Im Evangelium selbst ist der Name 'Herr' nicht nur Höflichkeitsanrede, sondern hohe Titulatur (7,13.19; 10,1.39.41; 11,39)", Josef Ernst, *Lukas* 23. He refers to the use of the *Kurios*-title in Luke, but his comment is also applicable to the use of the title in Matthew.

⁸²² ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς υἱὸς Δαυίδ, Mt. 9:27. Cf. France, *Matthew* 366.

⁸²³ Found 19 times in the Psalms and 5 times in Matthew.

⁸²⁴ A random "cross-section" of Psalms 1-33 offers 17 occurrences of the term in various verbal and nominal inflections: in LXX numbering they are Pss. 3:5, 4:4, 5:1, 9:13, 16:6, 17:7 (two instances), 21:3, 21:25, 26:7, 27:1, 29:3, 29:9, 30:23, 32:3, 33:7 and 33:18. In two cases, the verb "cry out" is followed by the plea *Kurie eleêson*: Pss. 9:13-14 and 26:7.

⁸²⁵ See section 6.2.1.

of Jesus is for Matthew a motive to complement his teaching activity with his healing activity”⁸²⁶. One could thus interpret the entire section starting in chapter 17:22 until the end of the story about the blind men as a development of the compassion of Jesus; in fact, there is a “framing” or *inclusio* provided by the concept of *eleos* which is expounded in the account of the healing of the epileptic boy which directly precedes the long section on teaching and in which the father pleads “Lord have mercy” (Matthew 17:14-20), and again expounded in the narrative of Jesus’ restoring the sight of the blind men, who also plead “Lord have mercy.” In the middle stands the account of Jesus’ teaching activity.

It is the dynamic relation between the plea for mercy and the fitting response of compassion that not only gives the narrative context, but also structure and cohesion. It echoes the dynamics of salvation worded time and again in the Old Testament. John Nolland implicitly co-opts the plea of the two blind men when he discusses the plea of the Syro-Phoenician woman: “...the woman’s call for mercy echoes the language of the Psalms, and her confession of faith is a recognition of the saving intervention of the God of Israel through his messiah”⁸²⁷. It is with this perspective before the eyes that one could offer some concluding remarks. The Old Testament contains many references to blindness⁸²⁸. As remarked before, Jewish believers saw a causal relation between sin and destiny; blindness was interpreted as the consequence of sinning⁸²⁹. Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck mention a verse from the Nedarim which states that the blind, together with three other classes of persons, are perceived to be as good as dead⁸³⁰. When Jesus healed the blind, they found light and life, a beneficence that was the fruit of his compassion. They had the experience that they were in the light of God’s living presence again, a presence which they may have thought they had forfeited because of being sinful and unacceptable. The compassion of Jesus healed and freed them fully: they were now free to go where they pleased, following their own eyes. They could now also experience life in community. What happened to them, is a *reprise* of what is

⁸²⁶ “Jesu Erbarmen scheint für Matthäus ein Motiv zu sein, die Lehrtätigkeit Jesu um seine Heiltätigkeit zu ergänzen”, Braumann, “Jesu Erbarmen” 310. Nolland says the following (when discussing Mt. 14:14): “In Mark, his compassionate response is to teach. In Matthew, his response becomes healing, which is more obviously a mark of compassion than teaching is...”, Nolland, *Matthew* 589.

⁸²⁷ Nolland, *Matthew* 632. Nolland refers to the other account by Matthew of the healing of two blind men (Mt. 9:27-31). Whether the woman’s plea was really also a confession of faith is debatable; it is however still possible that this is the way that Matthew decided to picture it (cf. Mt. 15:21-28).

⁸²⁸ Some examples are Deut. 28:28-29, Ps. 146:8, Is. 29:18, 35:5, 42:7, 42:19 and 61:1. In 2 Sam. 5:8, it is even reported that David hated the lame and the blind, but there is a story behind it (it was part of a riddle by the Jebusites meaning that the only access to their stronghold was through a water tunnel).

⁸²⁹ Cf. John 9:1.

⁸³⁰ Nedarim 64b; the Nedarim are concerned with the oral tradition “outside” the Mishnah. Hermann Leberecht Strack & Paul Billerbeck, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus Erläutert aus Talmud and Midrasch* (München: Beck, 1922) 524. The other three classes are paupers, lepers and the childless.

testified in Psalm 27: the psalmist starts by calling the Lord his “light”⁸³¹. Verse 7 states “I cried out ‘Have mercy on me and hear me’”⁸³². In Luke’s parallel account, we read in the concluding verse (Luke 18:43) that the healed man followed Jesus and praised God. In Mark 10:52 we read that Jesus told Bartimaeus that he was now free to go his way⁸³³. Bartimeus chooses to spend his freedom by following Jesus. All three accounts report that the blind man/men followed Jesus. They were liberated and free to go where they liked, but to them, the presence and compassion of Jesus created a milieu in which they felt even freer. Luke adds that the healed man and also the onlookers “praised God”. Earlier, the body language and gestures accompanying words of supplication were discussed. Here again, it is necessary to envisage what the man’s praise entailed. Even today there are traditional cultures which preserve the custom of the “praise singer”, for example in South Africa. In a slightly bowed body position and with knees bent to show deference and respect, the praise singer shouts and sings sentences and slogans of praise while sometimes walking backwards in front of the recipient of the praise, sometimes following him, sometimes circling him, lowering and raising his arms. When we read that the man “praised” God, this is what we must imagine, also not forgetting the expressions of admiration and joy which must have showed on his face. Praise, thanksgiving, gratitude, rejoicing: these are all the happy harvest of compassion. Even when Matthew and Mark simply mention that the men/man “followed Jesus”, the notion of praise must have been implicit in the word. This was the appropriate response to the compassion which Jesus enacted; in praise there is in addition always and invariably the element of gratitude, thanksgiving and rejoicing which complement the aptness of the response. In this response, we find the acknowledgement that Jesus is the true Servant of the Lord who would open blind eyes (Isaiah 42:7)⁸³⁴ just like the Lord opens the eye of the blind (Ps. 146:8). He is the One who would come, displaying the compassion of the Lord as anticipated in the Testaments of Levi, Zebulon and Naphtali, at the end of times when the eyes of the blind shall see (Isaiah 29:18, 35:5). Matthew states that Jesus touched the blind men’s eyes; according to Mark and Luke, Jesus simply declared them healed. Perhaps this is an allusion to the LXX version of Isaiah 61:1 where it is written “The Lord has sent his spirit over me...to proclaim sight to the blind”⁸³⁵. Jesus’ compassionate deeds were the attestation of his divine calling: “Then the Lord asked him [Moses]: ‘Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them dumb or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?’” (Exodus 4:11).

⁸³¹ κύριος φωτισμός μου καὶ σωτήρ μου, “Lord, my light and my salvation” (Ps. 26:1 in the LXX).

⁸³² ἐκέκραξα ἐλέησόν με καὶ εἰσάκουσόν μου (Ps. 26:7 in the LXX); cf. Ps. 120:1 “In my distress I cried out to the Lord, and He answered me”, ἐν τῷ θλίβεσθαί με ἐκέκραξα καὶ εἰσήκουσέν μου (LXX Ps. 119:1).

⁸³³ καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὕπαγε.

⁸³⁴ In the LXX version, “Jacob” is the predicate of “My servant”: Ἰακωβ ὁ παῖς μου.

⁸³⁵ κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν; the words “and sight to the blind” are only in the LXX.

6.2.3.4 *The Raising of the Widow's Son (Luke 7:11-17)*

This story is found only in Luke, belonging to his *Sondergut*. It is one of 3 accounts in the gospels in which the raising of a dead person is related; the other two instances are the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22-24, 35-43)⁸³⁶ and the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44). It follows the pericope treating the healing of the centurion's servant (Luke 7:1-10) and precedes John the Baptist's question to Jesus (Luke 7:18-23). In the preceding chapters 5 and 6, Luke had already reported the healing of a leper, a paralytic and the man with a withered hand, as well as the servant of the centurion who was seriously ill (opening of chapter 7). From a redactional viewpoint, it is now fitting to relate the raising of Jairus' daughter, in order that John the Baptist's question to Jesus could receive a comprehensive and satisfying answer: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind see again, the lame walk around, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and good news is proclaimed to the poor..." (Luke 7:22)⁸³⁷. Regarding the first 2 pericopes in chapter 7, there may have been another editorial consideration in Luke's mind which reflects interesting parallels: the first pericope relates the story of the centurion pleading on behalf of his servant (7:1-10), while in 2 Kings 5, we find the king of Aram pleading with Elisha on behalf of his official Naaman for his healing from leprosy. The second pericope, which is the topic of the present discussion, has parallels with Elijah's raising of the widow of Zarephath's son (1 Kings 17:8-24) as well as Elisha's raising the son of the woman of Shunem (2 Kings 4:8-37). The two remaining accounts of dead being resurrected are in Acts⁸³⁸.

In the above paragraph, contextual and intertextual matters have been pointed out. One more introductory discussion will be given, and that is concerning the position, status and prospects of a widow within the social circumstances of that time. The reason for this digression is simple: only by plumbing the depths of this widow's plight is it possible to plumb the depths of compassion that Jesus felt for her. The greater the understanding of her desolation and despair, the greater the appreciation of the extent of Jesus' care and concern for her. Therefore the following comments will be offered. In the paternalistic and patrilineal societal structure of that time, one of the worst fates that could befall a woman, besides being childless, was never to find a husband (or rather, never to "be found" by a husband) or to lose her husband. With the demise of her husband, a woman was left without security, unless she had

⁸³⁶ Parallel versions in Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26 and Luke 8:40-42, 49-56.

⁸³⁷ Mentioned by both Darrell Lane Bock, *Luke*, vol. 1, BECNT 3A (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994) 646 and Heinz Giesen, "Gottes Zuwendung zu seinem Volk. Die Auferweckung eines jungen Mannes aus Naïn (Lk 7,11-17)", SNTU 35 (Linz: Plöchl, 2010) 11. Jesus' answer is an allusion to Is. 35:5-6 and 26:19, amongst other verses. Bauer-Aland, *Greek-English NT* 177, also gives Sir. 48:5 (referring to Elijah's raising of the dead boy), but not the original passage in 1 Kings 17: 8-24, or Elisha's raising of Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:8-37).

⁸³⁸ Peter raising Tabitha/Dorcas (Acts 9:36-42) and Paul raising the young man Eutychus (Acts 20:7-10).

sons old enough to care for her, or family who could take her in. Even so, a widow was marginalised, and often dependent on alms to eke out her existence. The widow of Zarephath is an apt example: When during the severe drought in Israel, Elijah asks her for a piece of bread and a little water, the widow answers that she is now preparing the last of her food for her and her son, after which they will be preparing themselves to starve to death (1 Kings 17:12). The reason why the ministry of a deacon (διάκονος) was created in the earliest phase of the Christian church was because Hellenic widows complained that Hebrew widows were favoured in the daily distribution of alms (Acts 6:1); from this it could be established with certainty that firstly, widows were dependent on daily distributions of food, and secondly, widows of gentile descent, in other words “strangers/foreigners” or alien residents, received smaller portions of food and alms than the Jewish widows. There were regulations in the Old Testament to provide support for a widow: one was the Levirate marriage which placed an obligation on the brother(s) of the deceased to marry the widow⁸³⁹. Other regulations, concerned not only with a widow, but sometimes with the other two classes of people who lived fraught existences, namely the orphan and the stranger/foreigner (*gēr*), are found in Deuteronomy 24: “Do not deny justice to a foreigner or an orphan, and do not take a widow’s garment as security”(Deuteronomy 24:17). Yet another instruction, worthwhile quoting for its moving refrain, is the following (Deuteronomy 24:19-21):

When you harvest your field and happen to miss a sheaf on the field,
do not go back to fetch it. Let it be for the widow, the orphan and the stranger.
Then the Lord your God will bless you in all that you undertake.
When you beat olives from your tree, do not go over the branches again.
Let what is left be for the widow, the orphan and the stranger.
When you gather the grapes in your vineyard, do not afterward go again.
Let what is left be for the widow, the orphan and the stranger.

The metaphor of a widow was often employed in the Old Testament to depict humiliation, loneliness, and desolation: “How forlorn lies the city, once full of people! How like a widow has she become!” (Lamentations 1:1)⁸⁴⁰. In the New Testament, we also find clues to the precarious existence of widows. Paul speaks of widows who are truly in need and left all alone (1 Timothy 5:5). In a typical vein, James gives a description of true religion, and almost unintentionally also of the condition of widowhood: true and pure God-service is “to visit orphans and widows *in their affliction*” (James 1:27). A last perspective: we do not know how old the son of the widow of Nain was, but we can take it for granted that he would be taking

⁸³⁹ Deut. 25:5-10.

⁸⁴⁰ Other examples of the use of this metaphor is Is. 54:4 and Jer. 15:8.

over his father's role as the family's breadwinner sooner or later, depending on his age. Besides the prospect of social security and stability that her son offered her through his patrimony, his presence must have been of great psychological support to her; he was to her the living reminder of his father and her husband and the guarantor of his father's patrilineal heritage. With his death, she had essentially lost all her remaining social and emotional support, because he was her only son (μονογενὴς υἱός, Luke 7:12). Luke uses the description *monogenês* in two more places in the two following chapters, referring to the only daughter of Jairus and the father of the boy with the unclean spirit⁸⁴¹. Apart from any possible allusions that the word could contain, its use adds a poignancy to all three accounts of Luke.

This is the background to the encounter between Jesus and the grieving widow. Just as Elijah came upon the widow of Zarephath at "the gate of the city" (1 Kings 14:10), Jesus comes upon the widow of Nain as the funeral procession is leaving "the gate of the city". The name of the city, Nain, means "pleasing/pleasant"⁸⁴²; for the widow it would not have that meaning anymore, but would always be associated with irretrievable loss. Both Bock and Giesen contrast the two parties meeting each other outside the gate: the one is a procession of death, and the other a procession of life⁸⁴³. One could add to this image: in a medieval chant, Jesus is called the *Dux Vitae*⁸⁴⁴. He is the life-bearing and life-bringing leader of the party meeting the funeral cortège. He sees her, in the sense of taking note of her (Gourgues' first step in the playing out of compassion). Unlike the previous 3 accounts, in which a plea is directed to Jesus, his compassion here needs no plea to become operative⁸⁴⁵. His compassion assumes an even wider reach. It impels Him to take the initiative without first being prompted. He does something which does not usually receive comment, but which evidences an initiative that is drastic: he interferes in the funeral procession and brings it to a halt. Beside the fact that He was a complete stranger to the members of the cortège, this kind of behaviour, were it coming from a mere mortal, would be entirely inappropriate and presumptuous. Even today, one could imagine the offense taken by people, and their utter unbelief, if a complete stranger would stop a convoy of cars on their way to a funeral for his/her own gratuitous reasons. Jesus intervenes, not with presumption, but with an unhesitating assumption of authority. Gourgues' three steps of compassion are played out here: Jesus sees the widow, has compassion for

⁸⁴¹ Θυγάτηρ μονογενής, Lk. 8:42; μονογενής μοί ἐστίν, Lk. 9:38. There are 6 more occurrences of the term in the NT, in John 1:14, 1:18, 3:16, 3:18, Hb 11:17 (referring to Isaac) and 1 John 4:9.

⁸⁴² Derived from נָעִמָּה; cf. Naomi (נָעִמָּה), mother-in-law of Ruth, whose name comes from the same root.

⁸⁴³ "Way of Life and way of death", Bock, *Luke* 649; "Zug des Lebens", "Zug des Todes", Giesen, "Gottes Zuwendung" 12.

⁸⁴⁴ The sequence *Victimae Paschali laudes*. The context of the designation is the following: *Dux vitae mortuus, regnat vivus*, "The Life-Leader died; now He reigns as the Living."

⁸⁴⁵ As mentioned before, the woman might not have been able to utter a plea; she was overcome by grief, and crying hard, as is clear from Jesus' words to her.

her and draws nearer to her so that He can speak to her. This is why He stops the procession. His words are to her are “Do not weep” (μὴ κλαῖε). His words give us another glimpse into her condition. As a rule, the Greek verb indicates audible/loud weeping or wailing (in other words, “crying” in both a literal and a figurative sense), as opposed to *dakruein* which usually means soft/quiet/inaudible crying⁸⁴⁶. Again, to a Western mind occupied with internalising emotions and only expressing them in a controlled and understated way, it may be enlightening to draw a parallel between the way and practice of weeping/crying/wailing in Biblical times, and the same custom still existing within some traditional societies today, for example indigeneous cultures in Africa, or in the Near and Middle East. Here, weeping or sobbing is done in a loud voice, so that one could truly speak of “wailing/crying/lamenting”. That it was likewise done in a loud voice in Jesus’ time is clear from the account about the daughter of Jairus in Mark: “And they arrived at the house of the leader of the synagogue, and He made out/perceived a commotion: loud crying and wailing”⁸⁴⁷. Accompanying the vocal expressions of grief are in addition also postures and gestures: in South Africa, it is not an uncommon sight to see a woman overcome by bereavement “let go” of herself, limply falling to the ground if nobody supports her, just as one often witnesses a similar gesture in Mediterranean Muslim societies when a woman would simply collapse backwards, again having to be supported in order not to end prostrate on the ground. Jesus’ words to the widow is a clue to the demeanour and behaviour of the widow expressing her grief. It is impossible to do justice to this passage (one is almost tempted to say it would be unscholarly) if one does not make a conscious effort to imagine and visualise the scene, with the widow expressing her grief in a vocal and bodily way; too easily it might become a mere “abstraction.” In contrast to the widow’s ravaged face, we must also picture Jesus’ face expressing deep pity for and solidarity with the woman, and his eyes radiating gentleness and compassion. In fact, an apt and just translation of Luke’s sentence ἐσπλαγγχνίσθη ἐπ’ αὐτῇ (verse 13) would be “He suffered heartbreak for her”, or “His heart wanted to break over her”. Such a translation would acknowledge both the depth of the experience (with heart and “innards” being equated) as well as the intense anguish and pity with which a person commiserates with somebody who has suffered severe loss. As had been

⁸⁴⁶ The verb is used with reference to Jesus in the shortest verse in the NT, ἐδάκρυσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, John 11:35, which is part of the narrative of the raising of Lazarus. It is possible that the verb is here employed for the sake of variation, as the verb *klaiō* is already used 3 times in verses 31 and 33. *κλαίω* is found 40 times in the NT; there is often a poignancy about its use which has to be taken into consideration, especially if one considers what it might perhaps have entailed: “Rachel bewails her children” (Mt. 2:18), “Peter cried bitterly” (Mt. 26:75, Lk. 22:62, Mk. 14:72 [the last without *pikrōs*]). When nobody worthy was found to open the scroll with seven seals, John wept loudly/cried hard (Rev.5:4). This is the term with which Jesus is described when He laments over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). More than once, we read how women cried over/bewailed Jesus: the woman with the oil of spikenard (Lk. 7:38), women of Jerusalem when Jesus was on his way to Golgotha (Lk. 23:28), and Mary at his grave, with the term used four times (John 20:11,13,15).

⁸⁴⁷ Mk. 5:38. They could probably already hear the crying from a distance.

mentioned with respect to the leper above, one could also venture that, even if Jesus had not resurrected her son, the widow would still have experienced this interchange between her and Jesus as permanently significant for her life. As it is, Jesus goes over to the fourth step, that of “touching”: we read that He touched the bier (“stretcher” or “litter” might possibly a more suitable term than “bier”). Although it is speculation, it may well be that He touched the dead boy, but that Luke substituted *soros* (bier, stretcher) out of concern for the taboo about touching a corpse (Numbers 5:1-2). If Jesus did indeed touch the dead man, it would be another example of transcending the confines of the own self to reach out and touch the being and existence of the other, regardless of considerations to the contrary. It is only when heartfelt compassion is the impetus that one is enabled to rise above and beyond oneself despite any feelings of disinclination. After Jesus’ gesture of touching, the young man sits upright, upon which we read another indirect testimonial to his divine authority: “He gave him to his mother” – He could only give her son back if and because the son was his to give, a statement which does not make any sense on a mere human level of perception or reasoning. It is clear that He assumes as of right that He is the one who dispenses: He dispenses over people and matters that could for no earthly reason be conceived as belonging to Him. It would be hard to disprove that He is pictured as having divine status in this account. There is much additional evidence for this view. For the first time, somebody resurrects a dead person on their own authority: while Elijah and Elisha had to evoke God in the respective Old Testament accounts⁸⁴⁸, Jesus does it on his own authority and jurisdiction⁸⁴⁹, and does so emphatically: “Young man, I tell you, arise” (Luke 7:14). It is only because of our (mostly unconscious) preconception that Jesus is in fact somebody with divine legitimation that these words do not bowl us over; coming from any mere mortal, we would have found it breathtaking. Another fact is striking: here, for the first time, Luke uses the title *kurios* for Jesus⁸⁵⁰. Up to this point, Luke has used the appellation “Jesus” 29 times, and after this point, he will still use it 56 times. This statistical phenomenon in itself makes the use of *kurios* exceptional and significant⁸⁵¹.

⁸⁴⁸ Cf. 1 Kings 19-22 and 2 Kings 4:32-34.

⁸⁴⁹ Cf. Ernst, *Lukas* 186.

⁸⁵⁰ Both Bock, *Luke* 650, and Giesen, “Gottes Zuwendung” 18, claim that Luke is the only synoptic gospel in which the title *kurios* is applied to Jesus before the Resurrection, but this claim must at the very least be qualified. The term *kurios* (in various inflections) appears 80 times in Matthew’s gospel. Even if all 22 Vocative cases addressed to Jesus are taken as only a polite form of address, there are 5 instances which appear as self-identifications by Jesus and which could not be merely dismissed or ignored (Mt. 7:21, 7:22, 12:8, 21:3 and 42:42). The rest are references to the Lord of the OT or terms used by Jesus in parables. In the gospel of Mark, Jesus is only called by that title at his Ascension (Mk. 16:19, in the longer version). In three places, Jesus refers to Himself by that term (Mk. 2:18, 5:19 and 11:3). The term appears 18 times in the gospel.

⁸⁵¹ It has to be pointed out that, according to the present author’s count, the word *kurios* in various inflections appears 104 times in the gospel of Luke as some kind of title, even if it is only a polite form of address, like “sir.” Before its usage in Lk. 7:13, it appears as an elevated title for Jesus only 3 times: in Lk. 2:11 (“A Saviour, Christ the Lord”), and twice in self-appellations by Jesus: Lk. 6:15 (“The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath”)

Regarding Luke's employment of the term *kurios* in this account, Giesen says the following: "In this way Jesus is clearly indicated as the Son of God who, in raising the dead to life, takes over God's role and acts with divine sanction/authorisation, for according to Biblical thought God alone is Lord over life and death (compare for example 2 Kings 5:7)"⁸⁵². Jacob Kremer sees in the term *kurios* an expression of the power that was made manifest at the Resurrection⁸⁵³. Another confirmation of his authority, also as the Anointed One, comes from Luke's use of the term ἐπεσκέψατο (in the crowd's exclamation "God has visited his people!", Luke 7:16). It is possible to construe that, together with Luke's use of the same verb in the mouth of Zechariah in Luke 1:68 and 78, it brackets a scaling of miracles wrought by Jesus until its culmination in the ultimate wonder, that of raising someone from the dead. Within this *inclusio*, all the accounts about what Jesus said and did could be interpreted as testimony that it was God visiting his people, and that through the wonders that Jesus performed, He had inaugurated the end-time or the last days. There is a decidedly eschatological connotation to the term "visited"; this association also speaks from the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs in which we find clear antecedents, in words and themes, to Luke's language, regardless of whether he was familiar with this document or not. Several of the Testaments have prophecies or expectations of the "Lord's salvation", when the "Most High" will "in mercy" "visit" "all nations" in "the last days" or "send his salvation" like a "light/sun/star" "illuminating those in darkness" or "imparting knowledge/revelation" "to the gentiles"⁸⁵⁴. The response of the crowd is further confirmation that Jesus is no mere human being: they proclaim that in Jesus, a great prophet "has risen" amongst them⁸⁵⁵, and that "God has visited his people"⁸⁵⁶. However, the most

and 6:46 ("Not all who calls me 'Lord, Lord'..."). Following its usage in Lk. 7:13, the term is used as title for Jesus 15 more times (7:19, 10:1, 10:39, 10:41, 11:39, 12:42, 13:15, 17:5, 17:6, 18:6, 19:8, 19:34, 24:3 [in some old sources] and 24:34). The other occurrences are either references to the Lord of the OT, the Vocative to Jesus, or the term used by Jesus in some of his parables.

⁸⁵² "Auf diese Weise wird Jesus deutlich als der Sohn Gottes angewiesen, der in seiner Totenerweckung Gottes Rolle übernimmt und in göttlicher Vollmacht handelt; denn nach biblischem Verständnis ist Gott allein der Herr über Leben und Tod (vgl. z.B. 2Kön 5,7)", Giesen, "Gottes Zuwendung" 19.

⁸⁵³ "...Ausdruck der österlichen Macht Jesu...", Jacob Kremer, *Lukasevangelium* 81.

⁸⁵⁴ Compare e.g. Lk. 1:68 & 78 (vs. 78 not in all, but in several reliable sources) and Luke 7:16 with Test. Levi 4:4 ἕως ἐπισκέψηται κύριος πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, and Test. Ash. 7:3 ἕως οὗ ὁ ὕψιστος ἐπισκέψηται τὴν γῆν. Other common words or themes in Lk. 1:67-79 & 2:29-32 which are predated in the XII are in Test. Ben. 9:2 ἕως οὗ ὁ ὕψιστος ἀποστείλῃ τὸ σωτήριον αὐτοῦ, Test. Levi 18:3 Καὶ ἀνατελεῖ ἄστρον αὐτοῦ ἐν οὐρανῷ, ὡς βασιλεὺς, φωτίζων φῶς γνώσεως ἐν ἡλίῳ ἡμέρας, 18:4 Οὗτος ἀναλάμψει ὡς ὁ ἥλιος ἐν τῇ γῇ καὶ ἐξαρεῖ πᾶν σκότος ἐκ τῆς ὑπ' οὐρανόν and Test. Jud. 24:1 Καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἀνατελεῖ ὑμῖν ἄστρον ἐξ Ἰακώβ ἐν εἰρήνῃ. Mention of the "last days/times" or similar expressions are found in the Tests. Lev. 18:2, Zeb. 9:5, Napht. 8:1, Jos. 19:10 and Ben. 11:2,3. Luke's usage of the term is also in Acts 15:14 (in 3 other instances in Acts, the term has different meanings).

⁸⁵⁵ The same verb is used by Luke for Jesus' command to the young man to "rise up" (ἐγέρθητι) and the crowd's term referring to Jesus (ἡγέρθη). If not intentional, it is a quite a felicitous and thought-provoking coincidence.

⁸⁵⁶ In Mk. 2:7, we find indirect, but indisputable confirmation from the bystanders that Jesus gave himself out as God: "Why does this man talk like this? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins except God alone?" Jesus

compelling evidence that, in and through the compassionate deeds of Jesus, the Lord and God of the Old Testament Himself is present and participating, lies in the parallels between Jesus' dealings with the woman (as with others) and the witness given time again by believers in the Psalms about the wonderful works and mighty marvels accomplished by God. From this perspective, it also becomes evident that the point of the miracle is not so much to show that Jesus has power over death (the "last", thus biggest enemy; 1 Corinthians 15:26), but to show that God's compassion goes beyond the limits of human existence⁸⁵⁷. In Jesus' compassionate actions, we see a recapitulation of some of the central themes of the Old Testament. With the four conceptualised steps in the unfolding of compassion as guideline, we could observe the following: Jesus "saw" the widow, in the sense of really taking note of her sorrow. In Psalm 31:7, we read "You have seen my affliction." He felt compassion for her, just like Psalm 103:13 witnesses that "the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him". Jesus went close to the widow; Psalm 34:18 proclaims that "The Lord is close to/near the broken-hearted". He told her "Do not cry"; Psalm 39:12 says "Listen to my crying; do not be silent at my tears." When He touched the bier (or the boy), He also touched her heart, and changed her circumstances, so that she could truly say "You have turned my mourning into dancing, you have exchanged my sackcloth for garments of gladness" (Psalm 30:11), or sing "Those who look to Him are radiant with joy" (Psalm 34:5)⁸⁵⁸. We have seen in earlier sections that Jesus' practising of compassion always had rejoicing, thanksgiving and praise as concomitants. This is not explicitly mentioned in the passage in Luke; it would be almost superfluous, because it is self-evident. It was compassion which transported her from desolation to consolation and transformed her shattered life into new beginnings. The events around the widow of Nain are a replication of salvific events performed by the God of the Old Testament and professed by believers in the form of shorter or longer narratives of praise, confession and thanksgiving, of which the mercy motto is an outstanding example. It is Jesus who assumes an eschatological role when Luke gives witness to his compassionate behaviour towards those in sorrow and distress. It might therefore be taken as fitting to conclude this discussion with the words of a prophet who spoke in an eloquent and moving way about the last days (Isaiah 61:1-3), words which could be applied to the encounter between the Messiah who was to come, and the widow of Nain:

had the opportunity to correct them if they misunderstood his words, but He does the opposite: He confirms/validates his words with his subsequent action of healing the paralytic.

⁸⁵⁷ "Es geht weniger um Jesu Macht über den Tod als um die Barmherzigkeit Gottes, die in Jesu Handeln erfahrbar wird", Giesen, "Gottes Zuwendung" 18; see also Klein, "Barmherzigkeit" 39.

⁸⁵⁸ Translation from the Christian Study Bible (CSB), Holman Bible Publishers, from Website Bible Gateway, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2034:4-6&version=CSB>. Accessed 29.7.2020.

Good tidings to the meek:

He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort all that mourn;
to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning,
the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

In summary of this subsection in which the four miracles performed by Jesus were discussed, some pertinent comments will be made; in the next and last section, a full discussion of final observations and conclusions will be given. The first comment is that Jesus practised what He preached. What He taught in his parables about compassion was also practically demonstrated by Him when He encountered persons in distress. He was the living illustration of his teachings. Secondly, in this respect his practical conduct was also a demonstration and vindication of the Old Testament message of the “divine deed dimension” about a God who was not only “conceptually” or “in principle” a merciful, compassionate, patient and good God, but a God who time and again made his pathos palpable through concrete and active interventions in the life of Israel. In his compassionate conduct, Jesus thus not only showed his truthfulness and trustfulness, the unity of his own words and works, but also the reliability and veracity of the one and only God of Israel, the “one-ness” of his promises and their fulfilment.

Thirdly, there is another aspect of Jesus’ caring concern for persons in distress that is striking: in his telling of the parables discussed in the previous subsection, He chose the verb *splangchnizomai* to describe the response and subsequent actions of the protagonists in his parables who practised mercy, evidently because He felt that this term was the most fitting one⁸⁵⁹. What is striking is the following: the same term that Jesus used in his “fictional” parables to describe the appropriate response to suffering and distress, became the term that the synoptici chose to describe Jesus’ own and real response to suffering. He felt deep stirrings of pity and compassion. He experienced heartbreak on encountering persons who suffered loss. One can draw further inferences: the choice of the term *splangchnizomai* to describe Jesus’ conduct cannot have been a random choice. It must go back to an original eye-witness account or accounts. Somebody, or some persons, must have been present at these wonders performed by Jesus, and must have deduced from his “body language”, his demeanour, his facial expression, his gestures and his words, in other words, from “semiotic

⁸⁵⁹ Of course, we cannot say with certainty in which language Jesus related his parables. However, even if He related them in Aramaic/Hebrew, the Greek term *splangchnizomai* used in the synoptic accounts of these parables must have been considered by the synoptici as the closest equivalent to whatever Aramaic/Hebrew term(s) Jesus used. This means that in a certain respect, the issue is moot, since we deal with the given, canonical text.

indicators”, that He behaved compassionately⁸⁶⁰. How else would they have been able to deduce this? That this is not mere fancy could be proven thus: if Jesus did indeed encounter suffering persons and reached out to them, how else could He have looked? One could again adduce the principle of “aptness”: what would be the appropriate demeanour and gestures of a person conveying true compassion? It is at this point that certain remarks in a Theology of the New Testament by Klaus Berger must be evaluated⁸⁶¹. He speaks about “Isaiah in the New Testament” and gives a catalogue of messianic wondrous deeds mentioned in Luke, 1 Peter and Acts⁸⁶². Shortly thereafter, he claims the following: “Jesus ist nirgendwo ‘lieb’ und vertraut, er ist kein Seelenfreund und kein ‘herzallerliebstes Jesulein’. ‘Herz Jesu’ hat daher keinen neutestamentlichen Anhaltspunkt, eher ist von ‘Herz Gottes’ zu sprechen”⁸⁶³. Even if allowance is made that he may be reacting against a pietistic and sentimentalist view of Jesus (which however does not seem to be the case), he seems to exacerbate this statement by dismissing the text in which Jesus is pictured in motherly terms (“Jerusalem, Jerusalem!”, Matthew 23:37 and parallel Luke 13:34) by labelling it a phrasing of divine speech⁸⁶⁴. He continues by claiming that Jesus is seldom “upset/shocked/troubled”⁸⁶⁵. He completes his case by stating that, even when Jesus is portrayed as having compassion, for example when feeding the multitude, it should be viewed with the tradition of the ancient potentate/ruler as background; there is no way that He could be portrayed as a kindly person⁸⁶⁶. It is hard to reconcile Berger’s opinions with the theme that seems to be conveyed through the concept of *splangchnizomai*, a theme which seems to be made real and manifest in the person of Jesus. Firstly, one could argue that by dismissing the claim that Jesus shows motherly traits in his lament over Jerusalem, Berger also severs the implicit tie between the metaphor that Jesus uses and the originating meaning of compassion as a deep-seated motherly affection (*√rhm*). One could also argue that his comment displays a lack of realistic imagination: what image of Jesus is conjured up when one tries to visualise his lament over Jerusalem? Would he have

⁸⁶⁰ We are almost in the realm of speculation, but it is not unlikely that these eyewitnesses may have related their observations to the author of the *Quelle*, or to Mark, or to Matthew or Luke, or that one or more of these authors were themselves eyewitnesses and chose the term themselves. As already mentioned, it seems as though Mark was the first gospel writer to use the term (Williams, “Ehrman’s Case for ὀργισθείς” 8; see subsection 2.3.1). Klein, *Lukasevangelium* 389, fn.12 states that the usage of the verb might go back to Luke: “Vielleicht geht ἐσπλαγγνίσθη auf ihn [Lukas] zurück...” (he is referring to Lk. 10:33).

⁸⁶¹ Klaus Berger, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums. Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen/Basel: Francke, 1994).

⁸⁶² Berger, *Theologie* 25.

⁸⁶³ “Jesus is nowhere kind/meek and familiar, He is no ‘soulmate’ or ‘dearest sweetest Jesus’. ‘Heart of Jesus’ has no neutestamentical point of reference; once should rather speak of the ‘heart of God’”, Berger, op.cit. 31.

⁸⁶⁴ “Der einzige Text mit mütterlichen Zügen Jesu [verb missing] Mt 23,37; Lk 13,34 ist direkt übernommene Gottesrede”, ibid.

⁸⁶⁵ “Nur selten ist Jesus ‘erschüttert’”, ibid.

⁸⁶⁶ “Und wenn er sich ‘erbarmt’, wie bei der Brotvermehrung, steht das auch in der Tradition der antiken Herrscher. Es kan keine Rede davon sein, daß er als freundlicher Mensch geschildert wird”, ibid.

uttered his words with a straight, expressionless face and with an unmoving body? How would his voice have sounded? Again, one must venture the observation that it might be unscholarly not to account for the body language, facial expression and tone of voice that would be a fitting accompaniment to such a lament. Berger's following statement, that Jesus is seldom portrayed as being upset or shaken, is also mystifying. The semantic significance of the term *splangchnizomai* and its semiotic value and weight in terms of gestures and expressions are already adequate refutations of his statement⁸⁶⁷. This also applies to his last statement in which he makes light of the compassion that Jesus displayed towards the crowds. The present writer may have misunderstood the words that Berger used or the intentions that Berger had, so the above rebuttals are tendered under correction. However, it reminds one of some of the views held by the Bultmann or Marburg school of thought (if such a label may be used): Rudolf Bultmann held that the personality of Jesus was unimportant for proponents of Christianity like Paul and John, that the earliest Christians did not consciously or even unconsciously try to preserve a picture of his personality, and that any attempt to "reconstruct" the personality of Jesus could only be subjective⁸⁶⁸. One possible explanation for this astounding obliviousness to the Person of Jesus radiating from the gospels must be that the gospels are read through the lens of kerygma theology, of which one of the by-products is a dualism between the Jesus of the kerygma and the so-called "historic Jesus." It is hard to maintain such a theology while at the same time admitting that the personality of Jesus is tellingly and compellingly present in the gospels. One cannot accord the concept of *splangchnizomai* in the synoptic gospels its true significance and at the same time put forward a Jesus devoid of personal traits⁸⁶⁹. One could simply repeat France's comment on the verb *splangchnizomai*: "It is a verb which describes the Jesus of the gospel stories in a nutshell"⁸⁷⁰. No other term or phrase offers us a better or more touching insight into the Person of Jesus and the goodness that He emanated and demonstrated than this verb used in the synoptic gospels. No other single term approximates the meaning and message of the mercy motto more closely than this term. Like

⁸⁶⁷ To this could be added the many instances in which Jesus is portrayed as being frustrated or angry (e.g. in Mark), tired (Mk. 7:24, John 4:6), moved/troubled (John 11:33,38), grieving/crying (John 11:35), in agony (the crucifixion accounts).

⁸⁶⁸ "And so it comes about that the personality of Jesus has no importance for the kerygma either of Paul or John or for the New Testament in general. Indeed, the tradition of the earliest Church did not even unconsciously preserve a picture of his personality. Every attempt to reconstruct one remains a play of subjective imagination", Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Baylor Press, 2007) 35.

⁸⁶⁹ The following comments by C.S. Lewis, made from a standpoint of literary criticism, not theology, about Bultmann's view could be noted: "So there is no personality of our Lord presented in the New Testament. Through what strange process has this learned German gone in order to make himself blind to what all men except him see? What evidence have we that he would recognize a personality if it were there? For it is Bultmann *contra mundum*. If anything whatever is common to all believers, and even to many unbelievers, it is the sense that in the Gospels they have met a personality", C.S. Lewis, "Fernseed" 109-110.

⁸⁷⁰ France, *Matthew* 373. He refers to ἐσπλαγχνίσθη in Mt. 9:36.

not many other terms in the New Testament, this term offers an entry point and a heuristic lens for any Christological insights which are promulgated within a New Testament and/or Systematic theology. This concept could also serve as corrective for any Christology which undervalues the historicity or personality of Christ (to the extent that it is his words and works that constitute the historicity of the Christ-events). The methodology for developing the thematics of *splangchnizomai* within the cadres of New Testament and/or Systematic theology (and even a “Christian” theology of the Old Testament) does not fall within the scope of the study, but the study is at the very least a plea or an *apologia* for a greater reception and recognition of this hallmark of the Person and works of Christ.

6.3 Final observations and conclusions

In this chapter, the usage of the verb *splangchnizomai* was investigated in its 12 appearances within the gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke. The 12 appearances were grouped in three categories, namely in connection with five accounts regarding Jesus’ teaching, healing and feeding of the crowds, as terms used by Jesus in three parables, and lastly as terms employed when relating four wonders that He performed. Exploring the concept of *splangchnizomai* in the synoptic gospels made it reasonably clear that the notion played a role in the development of the theme of mercy in the gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke, and that in this respect, it enjoyed some reception within neotestamentical thought itself. However, the investigation will only have relevance if it could additionally be shown to have a connection with the potentiality of the mercy motto to serve as hermeneutical key for specifically a theology of the New Testament and of Systematic theology. For the inquiry to be successful, or even partly successful, there are two prerequisites: firstly, it must be evident that in and through the verbal occurrences of *splangchnizomai*, the mercy motto is summoned; if not, the exploration of this concept becomes immaterial. Secondly, it must be evident that the concept *splangchnizomai* is itself an important category within the New Testament, otherwise the mercy motto of the Old Testament, even it is indeed summoned by the notion of *splangchnizomai*, becomes part of a mere side-issue or incidental theme within a theology of the New Testament. Regarding the first prerequisite, it could be said that enough inter- and intratextual pointers were found which indicated a correlation between Jesus’ compassionate conduct towards crowds of people and the God of Israel’s dealings with his people. Some of these pointers were the parallels with God’s feeding Israel in the desert, a narrative that could readily be described in terms of the mercy motto, and the eschatological feast at the end of time prophesied by Joel in the same context than his recital of the mercy motto, besides the fact that Jesus’ compassion for the crowds was in itself a living illustration of God’s pathos for Israel. In the discussion of Jesus’ parables, it became clear that the mercy motto was expounded by Jesus in two cases (the Compassionate and Patient Father, and the Compassionate King and

Merciless Servant). Even the remaining parable about the Compassionate Samaritan could be shown to allude to the mercy motto: we saw how in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, the mercy motto also came to be applied to humans. This new usage was also adopted by Jesus when He described the Samaritan's conduct as exemplifying *splangchnizomai* and (indirectly) as *poiein eleos*: these terms are strongly suggestive of the mercy motto, here applied to human conduct, just as in the Testament XII.

With regard to the third category, one could say that the compassion that Jesus showed to persons experiencing loss and suffering was a practical demonstration of what He expounded in the three parables. What is more, it was a practical demonstration of the divine deed dimension alluded to in the mercy motto of the Old Testament: the compassion of the God of Israel was always interventive; likewise the pity and compassion of Jesus were always transitive, illustrating involvement and bringing about a change in circumstances. It would not entail a conceptual leap to claim that the verb *splangchnizomai* used with reference to Jesus signifies the same reality than the term *pathos* used by Heschel to indicate the interventive deeds performed by the God of Israel. In chapter 1, *pathos* was typified as Heschel's collective noun for the divine epithets listed in the mercy motto (amongst other epithets which are used elsewhere)⁸⁷¹. The present author should like to contend that the term *splangchnizomai* likewise serves as a collective noun for the epithets of God embodied in the mercy motto; it is a single term conveying the same meaning.

The above line of reasoning was followed to claim that the first prerequisite was met, namely that the verb *splangchnizomai* must be perceived as alluding to the mercy motto in order to have relevance for the present study. Regarding the second prerequisite, that it must be a significant theme in the New Testament for the mercy motto to be relevant for a theology of the New Testament, the following considerations will be offered: Klyne Snodgrass states that "compassion" as expressed in the Greek verb *splangchnizomai* is "one of the four main features of Jesus' message"⁸⁷². According to Luciano Lepore, Jesus confirmed the primacy of compassion which was revealed as a fundamental dimension in his ministry⁸⁷³. Köster states that in the synoptic gospels, the verb "is always used to describe the attitude of Jesus..."⁸⁷⁴. The scope of significance that the theme of compassion has within a New Testament framework is also expanded through a widening of its meaning: the messianic and universalist

⁸⁷¹ Ch. 1, section 2, p.4.

⁸⁷² Snodgrass, *Stories* 66; also see *Stories* 66 & fn. 9, p. 602-603.

⁸⁷³ "Il primato della misericordia" and "La misericordia...viene rivelata come dimensione fondamentale delle missione di Gesù", Luciano Lepore, "Il midraš di Giacobbe in funzione del giubileo", *Bibbia e Oriente* 256 (Bornato in Franciacote: Sardini Editrice, 2015) 181.

⁸⁷⁴ Köster, "Σπλάγγων" 553.

overtones that the concept acquired in Hellenistic Jewish documents, especially in the Testament XII, were consummated in the Person and performance of Jesus. Esser states in short that *σπλαγχνίζομαι* signifies the “messianic compassion”⁸⁷⁵; he aligns his views with those of Köster’s, who posits that the usage of the verb in the synoptic gospels has a messianic connotation and forms part of an increasing tendency to characterise Jesus in terms of “Messianic attributes”⁸⁷⁶. The final step in the widening of the semantic scope of the verb *splangchnizomai* is that it pictures Jesus as playing a divine role when teaching or practising compassion: “Finally, then, the verb *σπλαγχνίζομαι* has become solely and simply an attribute of the divine dealings”⁸⁷⁷. It becomes an almost superfluous statement, but in his compassionate disposition and deeds, Jesus became the embodiment and incarnation of the mercy and compassion of God. “In Christ, compassion takes on flesh”⁸⁷⁸. The comment of Josef Ernst brings the compassionate conduct of Jesus in even closer approximation to the grace motto: as proposed in chapter 2, the formula could be seen as a *précis* of the Old Testament recitals of salvation in which the wonderful works wrought by the God of Israel found incorporation: “In Jesus, God’s salvific activity in history is personified”⁸⁷⁹. The mercy motto is a short exposition of the compassion of Jesus. This is not the place to discuss the divinity of Jesus, or the relation between his human and divine Personhood, but it must be said that it seems as though the significance of Jesus’ compassionate being and doing moves almost inexorably towards a divine dimension. His raising of the widow’s son already conveyed a divine jurisdiction and power, as He did not invoke another Authority, but did it on his own initiative and authority⁸⁸⁰. The choir of consensus continues: Reinhard Feldmeier states that the synoptic gospels are concerned with God Himself and his activity, and that in the mighty deeds of Jesus, it is God Himself who acts⁸⁸¹. Arland Hultgren refers to *σπλαγχνισθεις* in

⁸⁷⁵ “...das messianische Erbarmen”, Esser, “Barmherzigkeit” 57.

⁸⁷⁶ Köster, art.cit. 554-555. Heinz Giesen mentions that it is especially in Luke that the messianic claims of Jesus are emphasised; Giesen, “Gottes Zuwendung” 12.

⁸⁷⁷ Köster, art.cit. 553. He also says that the verb “characterises the divine nature of his acts”, *ibid.*

⁸⁷⁸ “En Christ, la miséricorde prend chair”, Éline Champagne, “Les mains de la miséricorde. Éléments d’une spiritualité agissante”, *Science et Esprit*, vol.70:2 (Ottawa/Montréal: CUD, 2018) 161.

⁸⁷⁹ “In Jesus personalisiert sich das Heilhandeln Gottes in der Geschichte”, Ernst, *Lukas* 24. He gives this comment when discussing the Christological *kurios*-title in the introductory section.

⁸⁸⁰ “Nur in göttlicher Macht kann er den Tod des jungen Mannes überwinden und die Tränen wirksam trocknen (Jes 25,8; Offb 7,17; 21,4)”, Giesen, “Gottes Zuwendung” 19. He also states that, in raising the dead boy, Jesus “took over” God’s role, since according to Biblical understanding, only God is the Ruler/Lord over life and death: “[Der Sohn Gottes]... der in seiner Totenerweckung Gottes Rolle übernimmt und in göttlicher Vollmacht handelt; denn nach biblischen Verständnis ist Gott allein der Herr über Leben und Tod (vgl. z.B. 2Kön 5,7)”, *ibid.*

⁸⁸¹ “...daß hier [in the synoptic gospels] zugleich von Gott selbst und seinen Handeln erzählt wird [...] Das geschieht natürlich am sinnfälligsten in Jesu Machttaten [...] in denen letztlich Gott selbst handelt und die durch Krankheit und Selbstentfremdung gestörte Welt seiner Herrschaft unterwirft”, Reinhard Feldmeier, “‘Abba, Vater, alles ist dir möglich’. Das Gottesbild der synoptischen Evangelien”, *Götterbilder – Gottesbilder – Weltbilder*, FAT II/18 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 119.

Matthew 18:27 and offers the following comment: “It is used in reference to God, expressing the divine compassion that is revealed in Jesus”⁸⁸².

Instead of giving a long list of similar voices, one could add the following perspective in order to draw the discussion towards a close: it is clear from the reaction of wonderment on the part of the crowds that, in Jesus, they were confronted with somebody more than a man. It was already pointed out how the scandalised response of the scribes when Jesus told the paralysed man that his sins were forgiven was in reality a confirmation of his divinity (“only God can forgive sins”). In Mark 7:37, after healing the man with an impairment of speech (μογιλάλον, Accusative), the bystanders are “exceedingly astonished”, declaring “Everything that He does, is good!” (καλῶς πάντα πεποίηκεν)⁸⁸³. These words are strongly suggestive of the words iterated seven times in the creation account in Genesis “And God saw that it [what he made/did] was good”⁸⁸⁴. Although this association may not have been intended by the bystanders, when this exclamation is read within a canonic context, it becomes almost inevitable to draw this parallel, and thus to equate the Jesus who did all things that are good⁸⁸⁵ with the God of the Old Testament who made all things good.

The entire inquiry into the concepts *splangchna/splangchnizomai* will now be concluded by coming to a full circle: in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, the document in which the novel usage of the term *splangchn-* in its various inflections and meanings found its inception, we read the following:

Until the day when the Lord shall visit all nations in his everlasting compassion.

Testament Levi 4:4⁸⁸⁶

In the last days, God will send his Compassion on the earth.

Testament Zebulon 8:2⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸² Hultgren, *Parables* 26.

⁸⁸³ Cf. Lk. 5:26 which is also a report on the crowd’s amazement after Jesus healed the paralytic of Mk. 2.

⁸⁸⁴ Gen. 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31 (the last reads “very good”). Cf. 1 Tim. 4:4 “All the work of God is good” (πᾶν κτίσμα θεοῦ καλόν). One is also reminded of the declaration in Test. Napht. 2:7 Πάντα γὰρ ἐν τάξει ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς καλά.

⁸⁸⁵ Cf. Acts 10:38, where Peter attests that Jesus “went around doing good things/and did good” (διῆλθεν εὐεργετῶν).

⁸⁸⁶ ἕως ἐπισκέψεται κύριος πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σπλάγχνοις αὐτοῦ ἕως αἰῶνος.

⁸⁸⁷ ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων ἡμερῶν ὁ θεὸς ἀποστέλλει τὸ σπλάγχνον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

And after these things the Lord will arise over you, a Light of Righteousness, and healing and compassion are in his wings.

Testament Zebulon 9:8⁸⁸⁸

Until the coming of the Compassion of the Lord, a man practising righteousness and doing mercy to all who are far and near.

Testament Naphtali 4:5⁸⁸⁹

In the Person and compassionate conduct of Jesus, these prophetic promises, resonant with hope and expectancy, were fulfilled. He was the Man “doing mercy” (*poiein eleos*) to all who were near and far, to Jew and gentile alike, to the sinner and the just, to the lofty and mighty and the low and meek, to the insider and the outsider. We have seen that the only usage of *splangchn*- not adopted in the New Testament was the personified forms that were quoted above. It would not be surprising if a lost and unknown early Christian document were discovered in which Jesus is called τὸ σπλάγχχνον κυρίου. He was the living Embodiment, the “Enfleshment” of the Lord’s compassion. His deeds were the re-enactment of the mercy, compassion, patience and faithful love of the God of the Old Testament.

⁸⁸⁸ Καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἀνατέλλει ὑμῖν αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος, φῶς δικαιοσύνης, καὶ ἴασις καὶ εὐσπλαγχνία ἐπὶ ταῖς πτέρυξιν αὐτοῦ.

⁸⁸⁹ ἄχρι τοῦ ἐλθεῖν τὸ σπλάγχχνον κυρίου, ἄνθρωπος ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην, καὶ ποιῶν ἔλεος εἰς πάντας τοὺς μακρὰν καὶ τοὺς ἐγγύς.

Table 6.3: Extra-biblical occurrences of the mercy motto

Baruch 2:27	κατὰ πᾶσα ἐπιείκειάν σου καὶ κατὰ πάντα οἰκτιρμόν σου τὸν μέγαν
1 Macc. 3:44	αἰτῆσαι ἔλεον καὶ οἰκτιρμοὺς
Pr. Azar. (Song of 3 Young Men) 18	ποίησον μεθ' ἡμῶν κατὰ τὴν ἐπιείκειάν σου καὶ κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος τοῦ ἐλέους σου
Pr. Manasseh 1:7a	Σὺ γὰρ εἶ Κύριος ὕψιστος, εὐσπλαγχνος, μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος
Pr. Manasseh 1:7b	τὸ πλῆθος τῆς χρηστότητός σου τῷ πλήθει τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν σου
Psalms Solomon 5:2	Σὺ χρηστὸς καὶ ἐλεήμων
Psalms Solomon 5:15	τὸ ἔλεος σου Κύριε ἐν χρηστότητι
Psalms Solomon 8:28	μετὰ ἐλέους καὶ χρηστότητός
Psalms Solomon 10:7	χρηστὸς καὶ ἐλεήμων ὁ θεὸς
Sirach 2:11	οἰκτιρμῶν καὶ ἐλεήμων ὁ Κύριος
Test. Simeon 4:4	Ἰωσήφ...εὐσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων
Test. Judah 19:3	ὁ θεὸς...ὁ οἰκτιρμῶν καὶ ἐλεήμων
Test. Zebulon 9:7	ἐλεήμων ἐστὶ καὶ εὐσπλαγχνος [ὁ Κύριος]
Wisdom Sol. 15:1	ὁ Θεὸς...χρηστὸς καὶ ἀληθής, μακρόθυμος καὶ ἐν ἐλέει διοικῶν τὰ πάντα
1 Clement 9:1	τοῦ ἐλέους καὶ τῆς χρηστότητος αὐτοῦ
1 Clement 18:2	κατὰ τὸ μέγα ἔλεός σου, καὶ κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν σου
1 Clement 23:1	Ὁ οἰκτιρμῶν κατὰ πάντα καὶ εὐεργετικὸς πατὴρ
1 Clement 60:1	σύ, κύριε...χρηστὸς ἐν πεποιθόσιν ἐπὶ σέ, ἐλεήμων καὶ οἰκτιρμῶν
Just. Dial. Tr. 96:3	τὸν παντοκράτορα θεὸν χρηστὸν καὶ οἰκτιρμῶνα ὁρῶμεν
Clement of Alex. "Rich Man" 39:30	ὁ πολὺσπλαγχνος καὶ πολυέλεος

Chapter 7: Concluding observations

7.1 Review

A concise summary of the rationale for this entire study would be the following: it was an attempt to serve as *apologia* for the grace formula. The *apologia* proceeded on the base of certain hypotheses, each unfolding from the other: firstly, that the mercy motto plays an important role as a central and foundational theme within the Old Testament, secondly, that as such it has not yet enjoyed sufficient and requisite reception in theologies of the Old Testament, thirdly, that the mercy motto is not absent in the New Testament, but played a formative role in much New Testament thought, and lastly, that it is a *desideratum* that the formula therefore receive more recognition and promulgation, within the sphere of New Testament theology, and thus also within any “whole-Bible” theological approaches. Any reasons not yet offered in earlier chapters why the mercy motto (as the verbal incorporation of God’s disposition and deeds of mercy, grace, long-suffering and compassion) could and should to a greater extent than up to the present be co-opted in theologies of the Old and New Testament as well as in Systematic or “Biblical” theologies, will be added. The formula’s relevance for other disciplines and subdisciplines of theology will also be suggested.

In chapter 1, it was pointed out that the notion of God’s mercy has up to the present not received adequate attention within general theological scholarship. The comments of several theologians from different contexts and backgrounds who mentioned this lack of reception were mustered; this insufficiency also became clear from a survey of literature spanning roughly 60 years until the present and was confirmed by statistical calculations⁸⁹⁰. The dearth of literature became even more evident in the case of studies focusing primarily on the mercy motto or aspects of the mercy motto. Very few authors have accorded this formula due significance; a few have given it some due, but often merely as an aside (in footnotes, for example).

Concomitant to the above findings, it was demonstrated that in general theologies of the Old Testament and the New Testament, there has been a tendency to create categories and

⁸⁹⁰ It should be mentioned that some theologians may not be of the same opinion. Karl Hefty, in a fairly recent article, states the following: “Recent theological work on mercy has rehabilitated the concept and restored it to its rightful primacy in theological reflection”, Karl Hefty, “Mercy as ‘Experience’ of Life”, *Theoforum*, vol.47:2 (Ottawa: Peeters, 2016-2017) 287-312, fn.5. However, in the light of the survey of literature undertaken in this study and comments by other theologians, it is doubtful whether this is a tenable view. Rather, it is a view regarding which the burden of proof rests on Hefty and like-minded theologians. One would almost wish that they were proven correct.

subcategories in terms of abstract notions, such as “Covenant” or “Divine Rule and Divine Community” (Old Testament) and “Revelation” or “Promise and Eschatological Fulfilment” (New Testament). This tendency was also manifest within dogmatics concerned with a doctrine about God, which often reverted to abstractionist and idealist concepts to describe the “being” of God in terms of aseic and apophatic terms (what was typified as “theontology” in the study). It was also shown that, even when theologians discussed the divine “attributes” of mercy, compassion and grace (and not the divine “being”), they often expressed these attributes in abstract, non-relational and non-transitive terms as though they were mere affections residing in God.

Chapter 2 was an essay to illustrate the centrality of the mercy formula in the Old Testament: it is a significant text within the Old Testament, as the many occurrences of the full or partly-quoted formula demonstrate, and it shaped Jewish thought to a great extent, not only within the growth of the Old Testament canon itself, but also in the intervening six centuries between the return from Exile to the coming of Christ. The role of the mercy motto in promulgating the early-Jewish notion of universalism within the Old Testament (Psalm 145, Joel and Jonah) as well as outside the Old Testament (the Testament XII) was highlighted⁸⁹¹. It was shown that its verbal character made it an eminent representation of key words, sentences and recitals in the Old Testament. Its role in developing a doctrine of God valid for Old and New Testament as well as Biblical theology/dogmatics was also discussed.

The last chapters were an attempt to find traces of the mercy motto in the New Testament. In scholarship, some, but very few, words and phrases in the New Testament were deemed as allusions to the mercy motto⁸⁹²; however, it materialised that when one reads the New Testament through the “heuristic lens” of the Old Testament grace formula, other words, word-pairs, word groups and even pericopes suddenly assume a profile that they did not previously exhibited. Like in the case of the Old Testament canon, it became evident that the mercy motto also shaped the thought of New Testament authors and played an important role in the formation of themes in the New Testament. Finally, the concept of *splangchnizomai* as it

⁸⁹¹ Many instances of the (partly-)quoted formula in Hellenistic Jewish pseudepigrapha and apocrypha were cited. About the influence of the mercy motto on the theology of the Old Testament and general Jewish thought, Jordi Cervera i Valls says the following: “...the relevance that Ex.34:6-7 holds in Old-Testament life is defining. The theology shining from the divine mercy qualifies the Torah, became a pointer in the prophetic books and in the wisdom books, and constantly enriched the apocryphal and rabbinic literature” (“...la rellevancià que Èxode 34,6-7 té en el si veterotestamentari és definitiva. La teologia que irradia sobre la misericòrdia divina qualifica la Torà, esdevé un referent en els llibres profètics i en els llibres sapiencials, i enriqueirà de manera regalada la tradició literària apòcrifa i rabínica”), Jordi Cervera i Valls, “Iahvè, Déu misericordiós i just: d’Èxode 34,6-7 a les Tretze middot”, *Revista Catalana de Teologia (RCatT)* 41/2 (Barcelona: Ediciones Gráficas Rey, 2016) 467.

⁸⁹² One such example is Jam. 5:11.

appears in the Synoptic Gospels was investigated; one could almost state that, even if there were no other echoes of the mercy motto in the New Testament, its evocation by the notion of *splangchnizomai* would already be sufficient to sustain the claim that the Old Testament theme of the mercy motto is continued in the New Testament.

It now remains to suggest in a cursory way what relevance the grace formula may have as a hermeneutical key with respect to themes within the sphere of theology, and by doing so, suggest possible further fields of research in which the co-opting of the mercy motto may prove to be fruitful. The views and statements of many theologians will also be mustered.

7.2 The grace formula in Old Testament and New Testament Theology

In a *New Testament Theology* by Gregory K. Beale⁸⁹³, he devotes discussion to the question whether a “centre in Scripture” or “heuristic lens” could be proposed when outlining theologies of the New Testament (his comments could equally well be applied to theologies of the Old Testament). He then states the following:

It is true that no center or cluster of centers or even a storyline has yet been proposed that has proved satisfactory for a decisive majority of scholars. And no such consensus proposal is likely in the future.⁸⁹⁴

It is important to note that he calls his outline of a New Testament theology a “Biblical” theology, indicating that the Old Testament is co-opted in his study, in contrast to classical New Testament Theologies which “stay formally only within the bounds of the NT canon”⁸⁹⁵. His positing of a “storyline” pertaining to both Old and New Testament theologies sounds promising, as it seems to engage with the verbiage of Old Testament speech, but he continues by describing these “storylines” in abstract terms⁸⁹⁶. One of the *lacunae* in the present study is discussing and evaluating the merits of different approaches to Old and New Testament and “Gesamtbiblische”/“whole-Bible” type of theologies, investigating the current state of research on Biblical theology and developing a methodology by which a sound Biblical theology could be arrived at, for example by relating it to a narrative substructure. These are topics which merit separate and full-length study; here, it must suffice to state that the mercy motto may serve not only as a “heuristic lens” in any of the classes of theology mentioned

⁸⁹³ Gregory K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology. The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011). “Centre in Scripture” and notion of “heuristic lenses”: p. 163.

⁸⁹⁴ Op.cit. 167.

⁸⁹⁵ Op.cit. 5. He also mentions other similar approaches, such as “Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments”, the title of works by both Hans Hübner (3 vols. 1990-1995) and Peter Stuhlmacher (2 vols. 1992-1999).

⁸⁹⁶ E.g. OT “promise/covenant/redemption”, NT “eschatological new creation”, op.cit. 16. Another possible shortcoming is that he does not refer to central OT texts like the seven quotations of the mercy motto, or a foundational text like Ex. 33:19.

above, but also as a “mediator” between Old and New Testament theologies, by providing the *continuum* between Old and New, and also providing the basis for an integrated Biblical theology of both Testaments. It is the continuity of what was termed the “divine deed dimension” which establishes a common theological ground between a central and foundational theme within the Old and the New Testament: the Old Testament is a testament and attestation of the wondrous deeds and mighty acts of God; this divine deed dimension is re-enacted by Jesus in the New Testament. The centrality of God’s acts in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament through the Person and ministry of Christ could hardly be overstated. It was already mentioned that wherever God’s mercy and compassion were recorded in the Old Testament, mention was invariably made of his “acts, marvels, deeds”⁸⁹⁷. The mention of the divine deed dimension is likewise a dominant theme in the New Testament. Much research has been done regarding the New Testament concepts of *erga*, *sêmeion/a* and *térata* and the perceived similarities or dissimilarities between them⁸⁹⁸. Again, this is not an avenue that can be explored in this study, but some remarks will be offered: references to the divine acts are dispersed throughout the New Testament, from the Gospels to Revelation⁸⁹⁹. Without listing all such wordings, one could mention those in which the concepts of God’s mercy and the divine works are joined, implying that the divine deeds are the manifestation of the divine compassion⁹⁰⁰. Also fundamental is the evidence from especially the Gospel of John that Jesus and God are in “synergy”⁹⁰¹. Many theologians in any case have proposed that the activity (*Handeln*) of God and the events (*Geschehen*) between God and mankind should be accorded a primary position in any theology, whether Systematic/Biblical, Old or New Testament: “*God and his favourable activity* is the fundamental and full content of the biblical tradition”⁹⁰². Grilli continues by stating that the rapport between the two Testaments must be found in the dialogical nature and dynamic structure which are found in both Testaments, and that this rapport must not be conceived of or configured as a static and

⁸⁹⁷ Chapter 2, section 2.4.

⁸⁹⁸ Some random examples are the following: Alexander Drews, *Semantik und Ethik des Wortfeldes “Ergon” im Johannesevangelium*, WUNT, 2.Reihe 431 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), Hans Förster, “Der Begriff σημεῖον im Johannesevangelium”, *Novum Testamentum* 58:1, Cilliers Breytenbach & Johan Carl Thom, eds. (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016) 47-70, Jörg Frey, “Zum Verständnis der Wunder Jesu in der neueren Exegese”, *Von Jesus zur neutestamentlichen Theologie*, WUNT 368 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), Gerd Theißen, *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten*, SNT Bd.8 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1974).

⁸⁹⁹ E.g. Mk. 6:3d, Lk. 7:2, Jn.21:25, Acts 2:11, 2:22, 7:22, 13:41, 15:12, Rom. 1:4, 6:4, Eph. 1:11, 3:20, 1 Peter 2:9. Rev. 1:17, 12:10, 15:3, 19:1.

⁹⁰⁰ Mk. 5:19 (“did”, “mercy”), Lk. 1:49 (“did”, “great things”), 1:49a & 1:50a (“great things”, “mercy”); this is besides the numerous instances related in the NT of “acting out”/“practising” mercy through concrete deeds.

⁹⁰¹ “My Father has been working up to now, and so am I”, Jn. 5:17, “I have shown you many good works from the Father”, Jn. 10:32 (cf. 5:36, 10:37-38).

⁹⁰² “*Dio e il suo agire propizio* è il fondamentale, complessivo contenuto della tradizione biblica”, Massimo Grilli, “Il Rapporto tra Antico e Nuovo Testamento”, *parola spirito e vita* (psv) 58, Alfio Filippi, ed. (Bologna: EDB, 2008) 124. Italics in original.

“logical” synthesis, but as as a dynamic and reciprocal process⁹⁰³. In a study of Exodus 34:6 and the 13 *middôt* of God in rabbinic literature, Jordi Cervera i Valls concludes that compassion as worded in the mercy motto is the most characteristic attribute of God. Regarding the continuity of this view with the message of the New Testament, he asserts the following: “The New Testament and the Christian tradition proclaim Jesus Christ as the incarnation of this divine compassion. The bond between the two Testaments and the two traditions is clear and consistent”⁹⁰⁴. Bernd Janowski places the concept of “event” in the centre of an Old Testament theology⁹⁰⁵; in his turn, Heikki Räisänen, referring to Joachim Gnika’s views, states that a theology of the New Testament should be a description of the salvific activity of God in Jesus Christ⁹⁰⁶.

If the above views about the importance of the divine activity and events as central theme within theologies of both Testaments are considered, it seems as though the mercy motto is eminently suitable to function as a hermeneutical key in such endeavours: it does not only unlock the divine deed dimension which is present in both Testaments, but also provides the bed of continuity in which the works of the God of the Old Testament and of the God-Man of the New Testament become one stream. The views of several more authors who perceive this unity between the work of the Hebrew God and the works of Jesus will be quoted next, but also in order to make a further point at the end. Francois Bovon, in his commentary on Luke, and specifically on the compassion of Jesus, comes to the conclusion that Luke himself interprets the deeds of Jesus as the work of God⁹⁰⁷. Reinard Feldmeier states that the Synoptic accounts of Jesus’ wondrous deeds are at the same time narratives of God and his activity; it is in the final analysis God Himself who deals with the world in and through the mighty acts of Jesus⁹⁰⁸. The correlation between the supplication *kurie eleêson* and the divine

⁹⁰³ “Nella lettura dialogica della Bibbia va ricercate una struttura dinamica, dove ciascuno dei Testamenti trovi senso in rapporto all’altro”; “Antico e Nuovo non sia configurata come sintesi statiche, superiori e logiche, ma come processo dinamico e reciproco”, art.cit. 125-126. Italics in original.

⁹⁰⁴ “El Nou Testament i la tradició cristiana proclamen Jesucrist com l’encarnació d’aquesta misericòrdia divina. El lligam entre els dos testaments i les dues tradicions és evident i consistent”, Cervera i Valls, “Déu misericordiós” 495.

⁹⁰⁵ “Nicht die begrifflich fixierbare Mitte einer pluriformen *Textsammlung* (Altes Testament), sondern die Sachmitte eines *Geschehens* (JHWH-Israel-Verhältnis) ist als Mitte des Alten Testaments anzusprechen”, Bernd Janowski, “Der eine Gott der beiden Testamente. Grundfragen einer Biblischen Theologie”, ZThK, Bd. 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998) 293.

⁹⁰⁶ “Beschreibung des rettenden Handelns Gottes in Jesus Christus”, J. Gnika, *Theologie des NT*, HThK Suppl. 5, Freiburg, 1994) 9; Räisänen, Heikki, *Neutestamentliche Theologie? Eine religionswissenschaftliche Alternative*, SBS 186, Helmut Merklein & Erich Zenger, eds. (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2000) 47.

⁹⁰⁷ “...la compassion de Jésus est exprimée en gestes visibles et le fruit de sa réaction est son engagement personnel. Il agit, mais Luc interprète cet acte comme l’oeuvre de Dieu”, Francois Bovon, *L’Évangile selon Saint Luc (1,1 – 9,50)*, Commentaire du Nouveau Testament IIIa (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1991) 357.

⁹⁰⁸ “...daß hier [in the synoptic gospels] zugleich von Gott selbst und seinen Handeln erzählt wird [...] Das geschieht natürlich am sinnfälligsten in Jesu Machttaten [...] in denen letztlich Gott selbst handelt und die durch

response of mercy in both the Old and New Testaments has already been discussed; Sandro Carbone says that this plea is employed in the gospels to draw together the merciful acts of Jesus and the power of the God of the Old Testament⁹⁰⁹. Commenting on Jesus' raising of the widow's son and the title *kurios* given to Him by Luke, Heinz Giesen succinctly says "In Him, God is present"⁹¹⁰. Josef Ernst sees Jesus as the personification of the salvific activity of God in history⁹¹¹. Wolfhart Pannenberg, in an article about the character of dogmatic statements, declares that statements about Jesus are statements about God's activity, and that in the confession of the Christ-events, God is praised as the One who through the singular events of the historical Jesus has proven to be the same in his being than what He is in his "doing". This doxological interpretation of the Christ-events also recapitulates the Hebrew life and world view⁹¹².

The "further point" that should be voiced is the fact that, although all the above-quoted authors place great emphasis on the correlation between the Old Testament and New Testament "divine deed dimension", this notion is not developed, nor are any suggestions made about which hermeneutical tool or "heuristic lens" would be best employed to bring this crucial correlation into focus. It is in this respect that the present author should like to propose the mercy motto. Its hermeneutical value has already been highlighted during the discussion; some other perspectives could be added. It became clear that Heschel's term "pathos" was his collective noun for all of God's benevolence and beneficence witnessed (in ambivalent sense: experienced and attested to) in the Old Testament, for all his perfect attributes and achievements which found their most concrete, concise and complete wording in the grace formula. Although there could be no misunderstanding regarding Heschel's usage of the term "pathos", it may in a sense be misleading, as it does not *per se* signify what was termed the "ergological register" of God's practical accomplishments. If this "ergological" dimension is adduced to the term, it would surely not be stretching the point to claim that the central message of the New Testament likewise is the "pathos of God", expressing all his goodwill

Krankheit und Selbstentfremdung gestörte Welt seiner Herrschaft unterwirft", Reinard Feldmeier, "'Abba, Vater, alles ist dir möglich'. Das Gottesbild der synoptischen Evangelien", *Götterbilder – Gottesbilder – Weltbilder*, FAT II/18 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 119.

⁹⁰⁹ "...ad avvicinare l'opera misericordiosa di Gesù alla potenza del Dio dell'AT...", Sandro Paolo Carbone, *La misericordia universale di Dio in Rom 11,30-32* [Monograph], *Supplementi alla Rivista Biblica* (SRB) 23 (Bologna: EDB, 1991) 183.

⁹¹⁰ "In ihm begegnet Gott", Heinz Giesen, "Gottes Zuwendung" 18.

⁹¹¹ "In Jesus personalisiert sich das Heilhandeln Gottes in der Geschichte", Josef Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, Regensburger Neues Testament, Jost Eckert & Otto Knoch, eds. (Regensburg: Pustet, 1993) 24.

⁹¹² "Die Aussagen über Jesus als Aussagen über Gottes Handeln...korrespondieren einem Verständnis des Ganzen der Wirklichkeit als der Geschichte, die Gott wirkt, also dem biblisch-israelitischen Verständnis der Wirklichkeit", "Gott wird durch das Christusbekenntnis gerühmt, in seinem ewigen Wesen der zu sein, als der er sich in den besonderen Ereignissen der Geschichte Jesu erwiesen hat", Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Was ist eine dogmatische Aussage?", *Kerygma und Dogma* (KuD) 8:2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962) 92, 94.

and good deeds, and in addition also hinting at the “passion” of Christ, which together with the Resurrection constitutes the central and decisive event in God’s history with the world⁹¹³. The insights of Jürgen Moltmann, to take one representative example, may be usefully incorporated in such a Systematic development of the Old Testament notion of the divine deed dimension and its continuation in the New Testament: one could co-opt his views on the “crucified God” by arguing that the consummation of the activity of the Old Testament God happened in the Person of and events around Jesus as the Crucified One. Moltmann offers a suitable methodological and conceptual entry point by engaging with Heschel and offering his own views on the “Pathos Gottes”⁹¹⁴. The relatively short sketch of God’s pathos given by Moltmann offers promising avenues of further systematic thought regarding a doctrine of God, and also regarding aspects of Christology.

The proposition that the mercy motto may qualify as a central category or *proprium* within a “whole-Bible” theology or within a Systematic doctrine of God could be motivated further by quoting an indefinite number of theologians of all persuasions, also from outside the sphere of Christian theology, who view mercy or compassion as the most intrinsic character and activity of God. Carbone asserts that compassion is “the principal attribute of God”⁹¹⁵; Didier Caenepeel calls it the “central attribute”⁹¹⁶. Numerous authors of the same opinion were quoted in chapter 1⁹¹⁷. Here again, the mercy motto may be taken as the nexus between the conception of the God of the Old Testament who demonstrates the disposition and deeds of compassion, forbearance and lovingkindness, and the view of Jesus as the incarnation of God’s compassion and all his other *middôt*, especially as they are encompassed within the term *splangchnizomai*.

The aim of the present research was to acknowledge the importance of the mercy motto as an encompassing and unifying theme of the Old and New Testaments, and by implication also for Old and New Testament and Biblical or Systematic theologies. A discourse on the ways and methods in which the formula could consequently be received and implemented in various

⁹¹³ πᾶσι in various inflections is in any case used 20X in the NT with reference to Christ (of which 8X in Lk.-Acts.)

⁹¹⁴ It could be mentioned that Moltmann equates the “pathos” of God with the “situation” of God. However, apart from the fact that “situation” is already an abstract noun, it seems as though with the concept “pathos” Heschel rather had the activity or beneficent deeds of God in mind (although he also worked with the concepts “situation/situational”). It was for this reason that the present author typified Heschel’s usage of “pathos” as a collective noun for the attributes/activities of God worded in the mercy motto. Cf. J. Moltmann, *Der gekreuzigte Gott* (München: Kaiser, 1972) 255-267.

⁹¹⁵ “...la misericordia è il principale attributo di Dio...”, Carbone, “Misericordia” 159.

⁹¹⁶ “...la miséricorde est bien l’attribut central de Dieu...”, Didier Caenepeel, “La logique de la miséricorde dans le discernement moral et pastoral”, *Science et Esprit*, vol.70:2 (Ottawa/Montréal: CUD, 2018) 168.

⁹¹⁷ Authors such as Birmelé, Davies, Franz, Heschel, Kasper, Rocchetta & Manes and Witte. See chapter 1, section 1.2 and 1.4.

disciplines of theology lies beyond the brief of this study. Only some hints or suggestions for possible entry points for the mercy motto as hermeneutical key were suggested in the previous section, matters which deserve separate research. In conclusion, the potential for the mercy motto to bring new insights and perspectives to other theological pursuits will only briefly be mentioned as hints for possible further research.

7.3 The potentiality of the grace formula as hermeneutical key in theological disciplines

We have seen that the mercy formula could fruitfully be applied in theologies of the Old and New Testament and in Biblical theologies, as well as in a dogmatics/doctrine of God. The grace motto has the potentiality to be applied as hermeneutical matrix in other fields of theological study as well. Such fields will briefly be highlighted.

7.3.1 Ethics

Aspects regarding a Christian anthropology or view of man, as well as pastoral, social and socio-economical questions developed in terms of a Christian approach could be mentioned here. If mercy, compassion, patience and constant lovingkindness are the *propria Dei*, then it follows that these qualities should form the paradigm within which the *propria homini* must be developed⁹¹⁸. Cory Labreque declares that "...since he [Jesus Christ] himself makes mercy incarnate and personifies it...so then are christians called to embody this mercy"⁹¹⁹. Daniel J. Louw's article on a pastoral approach which is informed by a theology of compassion, and not by "imperialist omni-categories" was already mentioned in chapter one⁹²⁰. In a trenchant and memorable article on "God's pedagogy for mercy" regarding the poor, Mark Slatter claims that mercy is "the only power on earth that can contest the untransformed ego and its narrow existence"⁹²¹. He speaks about the ethical onus which rests on any Christian to acquire the *habitus* of mercy, a process which can only happen in life's marginal spaces where our "untransformed ego's" are challenged and destabilised⁹²². These views tie in with a "kenotic theology", an exponent of which is Oliver Davies, several times quoted in this study. Another aspect that could be developed with the mercy motto as framework is present social and socio-economical issues such as the "refugee issue" and xenophobia: the concept of mercy requires a response of *filoxenia*, that is, hospitality and love towards strangers. In an article dealing

⁹¹⁸ Moltmann implies that the pathos of God should lead to a person becoming a *homo sympatheticus*; *Der gekreuzigte Gott* 261.

⁹¹⁹ Cory Andrew Labreque, "Catholic Bioethics and the Incarnation of Mercy. A Study in Hospitality", *Theoforum*, vol. 47:2 (Ottawa: Peeters, 2016-2017) 263.

⁹²⁰ Chapter 1, subsection 1.6.2, fn. 67.

⁹²¹ Mark Slatter, "Pope Francis's Poor: God's Pedagogy for Mercy", *Theoforum*, vol.47:2 (Ottawa: Peeters, 2016-2017) 273.

⁹²² Slatter, "Pedagogy for Mercy" 278, 279.

with the concept of Christian hospitality, Labreque claims that hospitality is a natural manifestation of mercy, and also a corrective for the “hyperfunctionality” of society (by “hyperfunctionality” he presumably means making needy people “objects of charity” instead of taking them in as guests)⁹²³. He also reminds us that Jesus’ compassionate healing work encompassed more than mere physical healing: “Note here that the focus of the story [of the healing of Bartimaeus], like most of the healing narratives, is not the alleviation of the physical ailment, but the restoration of the person who is healed to the living community”⁹²⁴. This should be the end that all social work has in view: the reintegration of the marginalised into society. Caenepeel describes Christian hospitality as a function of compassion comprising a welcome reception of the marginalised and a taking care of the “fragile”; he proposes a theology of “hospitality-alliance” or “hospitalliance” to develop these concepts⁹²⁵. Hospitality as socio-ethical principle based on mercy is a promising avenue of research with the mercy motto as matrix⁹²⁶.

7.3.2 Old/New Testament Theology in socio-historical context

Another avenue of research that could be pursued would be to study the general concepts of mercy and grace, as well as the mercy formula specifically, against the background of their ancient socio-historical context, as this would also shed light on the development of theologies within the Old Testament⁹²⁷. The Book of Ruth, which in the present author’s opinion has the concept of *hesed* (one of the epithets of the grace motto) as theme, would offer one such possibility. The Book of Hosea, operating with the notions of mercy (*√rh̄m*) and love (*√hb*), would be another option.

7.3.3 Existentialism, psychology

Some of the matters mentioned in the previous section are also applicable here, such as the notion that exercising compassion is a “kenotic experience” which simultaneously empties the ego and reconstitutes it into a new and liberated being. This notion is of equal validity for both a Christian believer as well as any other human being, regardless of whether they are pre-modern, modern, post-modern or “post-post-modern”. The notion of universalism will be listed in the next subsection; here already one could claim that practising compassion will lead to personal growth of any person, even those not subscribing to the tenets of Christianity. In fact,

⁹²³ Labreque, “Incarnation of Mercy” 259,261.

⁹²⁴ Art.cit. 264.

⁹²⁵ “...le mode de l’hospitalité, où ce qui est visé est un prendre soin des fragilisés et l’accueil des marginalisés”; “...une théologie de l’hospitalité-alliance”, Caenepeel, “Logique de la miséricorde” 174 and fn.20.

⁹²⁶ Cf. the contribution by Richard B. Hays regarding Christian ethics, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (New York: HarperOne, 1996).

⁹²⁷ E.g. Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Theologies in the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002). It was mentioned in the present study that the mercy motto, which is probably post-exilic, is representative of the theological development of universalism.

through practising compassion, such persons will be emulating the example of Christ who was Compassion personified, *to splangchnon kuriou*. God's compassion transcends all boundaries and knows no limits. Likewise, in a certain sense human compassion is not the exclusive domain of Christians; Karl Hefty claims that there is a correlation between "mercy" and "life"⁹²⁸, and his "life" is "human existence" in general, not confined to the mode of Christian life. Even an existentialist may find appeal in the following statement of Hefty's: "In the language of phenomenology, one might say that mercy manifests life's 'givenness'"⁹²⁹.

The concepts which are incorporated into the mercy motto are also those concepts which could serve as points of engagement for the Christian apologist conversing with the atheist or agnostic existentialist: Robert Dentan pointed out the "cool rationalism" which shines from the mercy motto⁹³⁰; it is not a conception which would alienate the sceptic, but one which would appeal to any person. Jörg Frey's comment regarding the existential relevance of the compassionate wonder-deeds of Jesus could also be mentioned: according to him, when these deeds are retold in the present, they constitute a protestation against human need and want, and contribute towards human beings'⁹³¹ battle against the "negativity of being".

7.3.3 *Universalism*

A last and very interesting but also challenging field of theological study which is opened up by the mercy motto is the notion of universalism, or stated more specifically, the question of the universality and inclusiveness of God's grace and salvation. There is no doubt that where it appears in the latter parts of the Old Testament canon, namely Psalm 145 as well as the minor prophets Joel and Jonah, the mercy motto denotes a divine plan of salvation in the last days that will include all nations. One of the central doctrines of Christianity is that only through Christ can one find salvation, a doctrine which is used by many non-Christians as one of the main reasons why they cannot accept Christianity, as they feel alienated by such a seemingly exclusivist and "random" view. In some way, the universalist orientation that the mercy motto achieved in early-Jewish thought must be accounted for when outlining a Christian doctrine of salvation. To my knowledge, not much theological literature has seen the light which addresses the issue; neither has the universal and inclusivist inclination and implication of the grace motto received much attention within any dogmatics which treat the doctrine of salvation. Any serious study of this topic would be similar to walking a tightrope between the

⁹²⁸ Hefty, "Mercy" 292.

⁹²⁹ Art.cit. 298.

⁹³⁰ Robert C. Dentan, "The literary affinities of Exodus xxxiv 6f.", *Vetus Testamentum* (VT) 13 (Leiden: Brill, 1963) 51.

⁹³¹ "In der erzählerische Vergegenwärtigung der Macht Jesu formulieren sie den 'Einspruch gegen menschliche Not' und tragen dazu bei, die 'Negativität des Daseins' zu überwinden", Jörg Frey, "Wunder Jesu" 170.

Scylla of absolute exclusivism, such as for example voiced in some deterministic doctrines of predestination, or the Charybdis of total and disinterested universalism, which even on an emotional, let alone conceptual level, does not seem likely in the light of shattering events like the Shoah and other genocides or in the light of the daily confirmation that *homo lupus est homini*.

7.4 Concluding words

The mercy motto is the most versatile formula found in the Bible. Other formula-like utterings mostly have a single and specific function: the “Lord have mercy” supplication occurring in the Old and New Testament can only function as a plea⁹³². The ritornello of praise “Give thanks to the Lord, forever lasts his goodness!” is a wording of praise and thanksgiving⁹³³. The *shema’ yisrael* formula is a confession. The mercy motto is an eminently versatile motto: it is in both senses of the word a doxological formula, confessing a merciful God as well praising Him for his great mercies. It is not only *confessio* and *adoratio*, but also *charis* in ambivalent sense: it is an attestation of God’s grace, but at the same time a wording of gratitude, which is the appropriate response to grace. It is both *homologia* and *apologia*: the confession of the words of the motto is also a witnessing to the world.

And they sing the Song of Moses, the servant of God, and the Song of the Lamb, saying:

“Great and wonderful are your works, Lord God Almighty!

Right and trustworthy your ways, King of the nations” (Revelation 15:3).

⁹³² אֱלֹהִים הָיָה / ἐλέησόν με ὁ θεός; see chapter 5, subsection 5.2.3.

⁹³³ See chapter 1, section 1.6.

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